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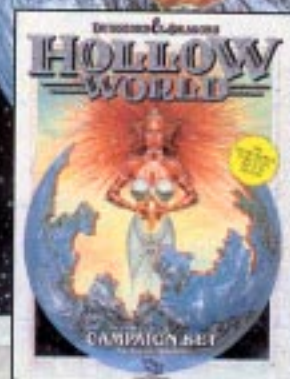
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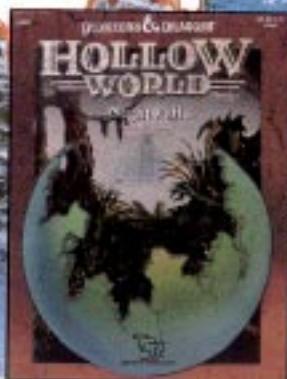
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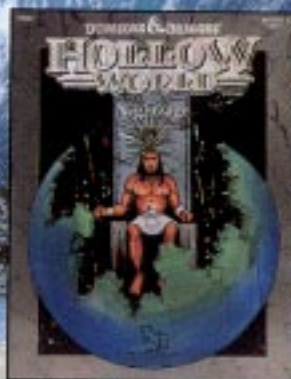
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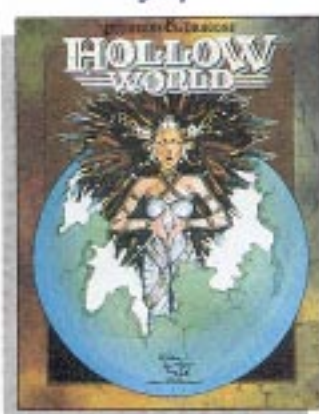
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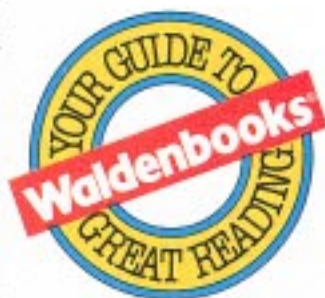
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COVER

Jim Holloway had a lot of fun with this month's cover, which he has named "Butch and Sundance: The Early, Early, Early, Early, Early, Early Years." The elf and halfling have discovered that their DM decided the campaign should be more exciting—from the *DM's* point of view, of course.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Why the psi?

Dear Dragon:

In DRAGON issue #155, I noticed that you are still using psionics with your elven god characters. Why didn't you change those abilities to magical abilities? Why don't you include Monstrous *Compendium* sheets with "The Dragon's Bestiary" articles? I'm sure that many readers would be thankful to have them.

Andy Mandiak
Rochester NY

Only one of the four deities in "The Elfin Gods" had psionic talents, and these talents were noted as applicable only to campaigns using the AD&D 1st Edition game's psionics system. No exact magical analogs for psionic attack and defense modes exist in the AD&D game, though you might use the mind flayer's mental blast (formerly psionic blast or mind blast) from the Monstrous Compendium as a substitute for psionic attacks, with the mind blank spell for psionic defenses.*

We usually don't put monsters on full pages when using Monstrous Compendium format because we cannot be sure that each entry will fill the page. We have a large number of monsters left in our files that we are slowly converting to AD&D 2nd Edition game format (which fits well in any AD&D 1st Edition campaign).

When possible, we will place monsters on full pages—but don't hold your breath!

The NPC lineup

Dear Dragon:

I really wish that you would republish some of the new types of characters like the anti-paladins and the savants. It really would be great if you could do that. If you can't, please tell me what issues they were in and where I can get them. I've looked in many bookstores but none of them have the old issues. Please do something!

Jessie Lin
Castro Valley CA

We don't plan to reprint NPC classes in this magazine, though we might do so for a Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology. Back issues containing these classes might be available through the Mail Order Hobby Shop, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. (write for details and a free 1990 catalog). We leave it to adventuresome gamers to convert

these classes into character kits for AD&D 2nd Edition campaigns.

To aid your search, here are as many of these previously published NPC classes and variant/nonstandard PC classes as we could find (including once-official PC classes from Unearthed Arcana and PC classes not used in the AD&D 2nd Edition game), with the issues in which these classes have appeared. We've also added references for articles that might be of interest to those playing such characters. Note that all of these classes were created for the AD&D 1st Edition game. Many are not suitable for use as player characters as they lack the statistical information and innate game balance to play them properly—but have fun anyway!

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EDITORIAL

A story

Once upon a time in a campaign far, far away, there were two adventurers named Black Bart and Ursula. Black Bart was a dark-haired fighter from an AD&D® game world, with a sneaky grin and a magical sword for every day of the week. Ursula was a good-natured barbarian with flame-red hair from the GAMMA WORLD® game, an expert with pistols and grenades. The details of how the two met are murky, but the important thing was that they did meet—and unexpectedly fell in love.

Romance is not a commonly discussed topic with regard to role-playing games. The article “Romance and Adventure!” in this issue is the only one I recall on the subject, aside from notes in an article by William Armintrout on TSR’s old META-MORPHOSIS ALPHA game, which appeared in *The Space Gamer* magazine. If romance appears in an adventure at all, it is as a minor subplot (one example takes place in the WG8 *Fate of Istus* AD&D module, on page 52).

I have a feeling that, in average game play, a full-blown fairy-tale romance with daring deeds and the works is most likely when only one of the two characters is a player character, the other being an NPC. Once in a while you get the same effect between characters run by two people who are already romantically involved in real life (I’ve seen it happen), but that’s rarer.

Ursula was the NPC of the couple mentioned above, but Black Bart never seemed to notice. They were seen everywhere together, happily bashing monsters and braving every quest that came their way. The peak of their careers came when they piloted their own cargo lifter during the great Damnation Alley coast-to-coast run across the ruins of North America, about which volumes could be said but my editorial isn’t long enough. Black Bart and Ursula were a bright spot in every game adventure, right up to the moment when Ursula died.

The end came very suddenly. A chaotic-evil fighter played by another player became irked with the rest of the party one evening and attacked everyone at once. This was particularly bad since everyone in the group, including the attacker, was as heavily armed as liberal DMs and transuniversal-campaign travel will allow. Guns roared, +5 swords lashed out, and 20-HD fireballs erupted across the campsite in a savage, no-quarter battle.



Ursula caught the chaotic-evil fighter’s main attack. She doubled over, nearly dead after the first melee round, and dropped her weapons. The fighter moved to finish her off and cut up the rest of the group, failing until the last moment to notice that Ursula had tugged the pin out of a torc grenade and was clutching it to her chest. The resulting explosion completely disintegrated everything for almost 50’ around: the evil fighter, Ursula, their equipment, the dirt and rock under their feet, everything. The party was saved. Of the two combatants, nothing remained.

Black Bart wasn’t the same after that. He became moody, which is a nice way of saying that he took out his frustration on every unfortunate monster that came within sighting distance. Something had to be done, so when it came my turn to be the DM, I brought Ursula back to life. But there was a price tag.

It seems that Ursula had been under surveillance by a mad scientist in another universe, and he’d fallen for her even if she was an unsophisticated barbarian. When she was attacked, the mad scientist worked the controls of his time-space machine and popped her out of harm’s way in the last fraction of a second before the torc grenade blew up (but he thoughtfully left the grenade behind for the fighter). Ursula became a prisoner in the scientist’s citadel, a mile-high needlelike tower in the wastelands of a world known as Barsoom.

Black Bart began to have dreams in which he saw Ursula calling out to him for rescue. Immediately seizing the chance to

find his true love, Black Bart learned of Ursula’s location during visits with high-level sages and wizards, and he gathered his allies for an assault. Warriors from lands of fantasy and science-fiction rallied to his cause, and the adventurers were soon neck deep in combat with banths, pirates, Green Martians with radium rifles, and worse.

Black Bart was relentless. When his crew reached the deserted city where the mad scientist lived, he ignored all the monsters that attacked the group, marching steadily on for the tower and killing everything that got in his way. In the final battle at the top of the spire, Black Bart fought the scientist in single combat and threw his headless body from the balcony. The subsequent escape from the tower (whose base was triggered to blow up if the scientist was slain) made up the final chapter of the adventure, and Ursula and Black Bart were together again.

I haven’t the faintest idea of what happened to those two characters after that. I would hope that they are happily hacking their way through the multiverse even now. The memories of that adventure would last for years, and we remembered too the cause for which it was fought.

Cheers to you, Black Bart and Ursula, wherever you are.



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Also known as... Denmark

Dear Dragon:

I am writing in response to Ethan Ham's recent article, "Also Known As . . . the Orc" (issue #158). Using alternate monster names is a good way to keep players guessing—especially in a low-level campaign in which characters shouldn't automatically know what they're fighting and how to defeat it. However, as a student of Scandinavian languages, I was very disappointed to see several errors in the lists of names:

—The names *sotrolde* (for aquatic ogres), *havmand* and *havfrue* (for mermen), and *skovtrolde* (for wood trolls) are all Danish—not Celtic, German, or otherwise.

—The name *haug-bui* (for wights) is not Celtic, either, but Old Norse (compare the Norwegian word for the "walking dead": *haugebonde*).

—The names *mara* (for the succubus) and *skogsrå* (for female wood trolls) are both Swedish.

—Finally, the name *huldrafol* listed for elves is indeed Scandinavian, but it is a misprint; the correct spelling should be *huldrafol*.

Most DMs, I realize, care little about those technicalities. But to me, having a Celtic NPC call a monster by a Nordic name would ruin the whole idea behind Ham's article (that names vary from culture to culture).

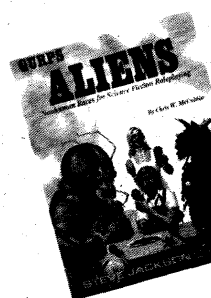
Kimberley E. Usher
Charlotte NC

Your input is appreciated. Having done a fair amount of research in the past, I know that such errors often lie in the source material itself. I would like to point out that name confusion among cultures can be helpful to the DM; a Celtic NPC might have heard a dying Nordic NPC refer to his slayer as a *skrimst*, which is the Scandinavian name for an aquatic ogre (known in Celtic society as a *soetrolde*). The Celtic man might then spread rumors about this "new monster" and have the foreign word produce much confusion as to the killer's true identity.

On another topic, I know from experience that renaming a monster and making minor changes in its appearance or abilities may seem simplistic, but it has dramatic effects in actual play, often generating fear and respect for the creature far out of proportion to the monster's actual power. I once wrote about a gaming episode in which a party (including one of my characters) had a night encounter with a red dragon that shot beams of light from its eyes like spotlights (like Smaug in the animated version of *The Hobbit*); when the dragon asked for our mules and treasure, we gladly gave them up. I'm fairly sure we could have killed the monster—but we lost our nerve and ran for it instead.

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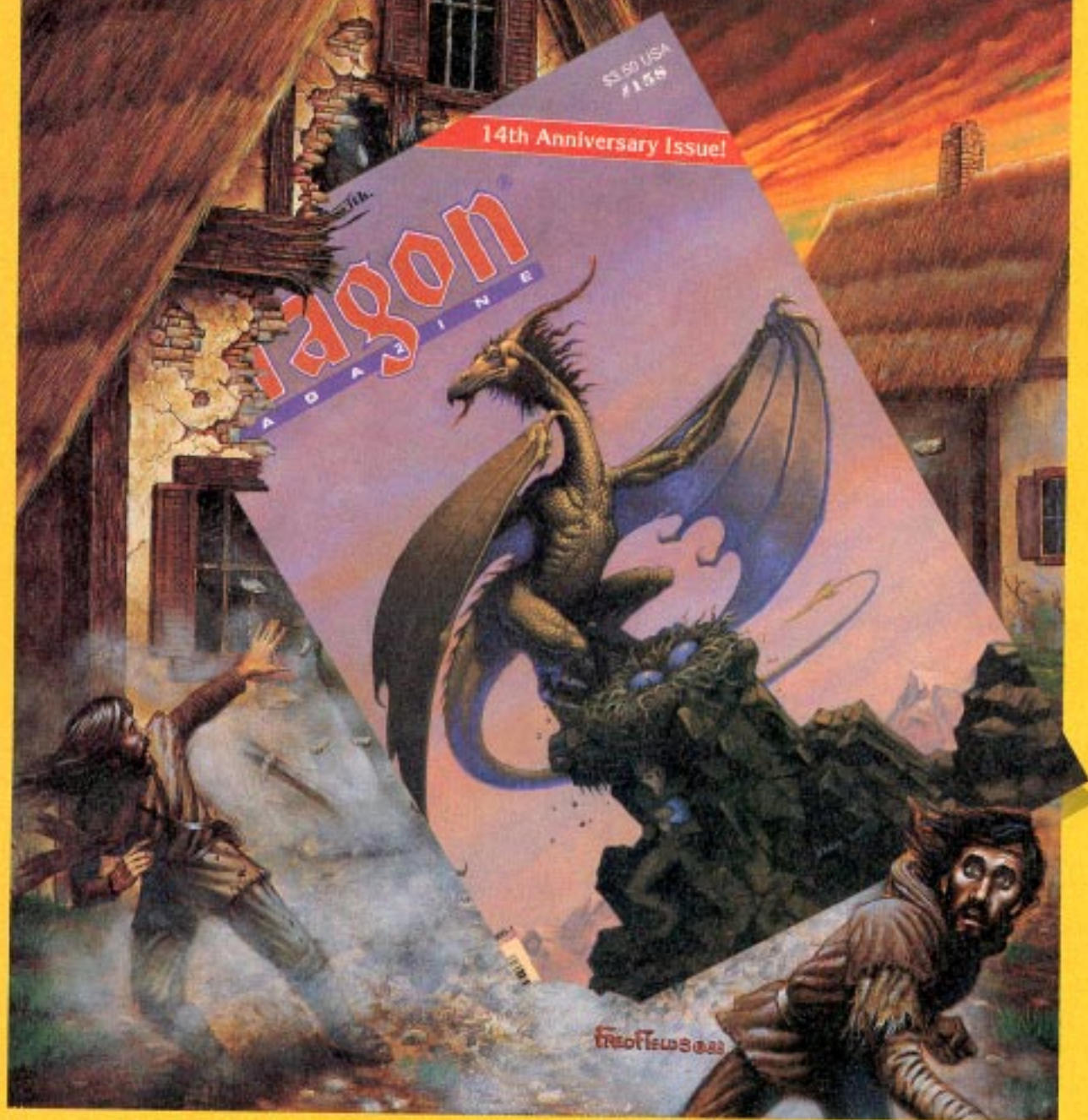
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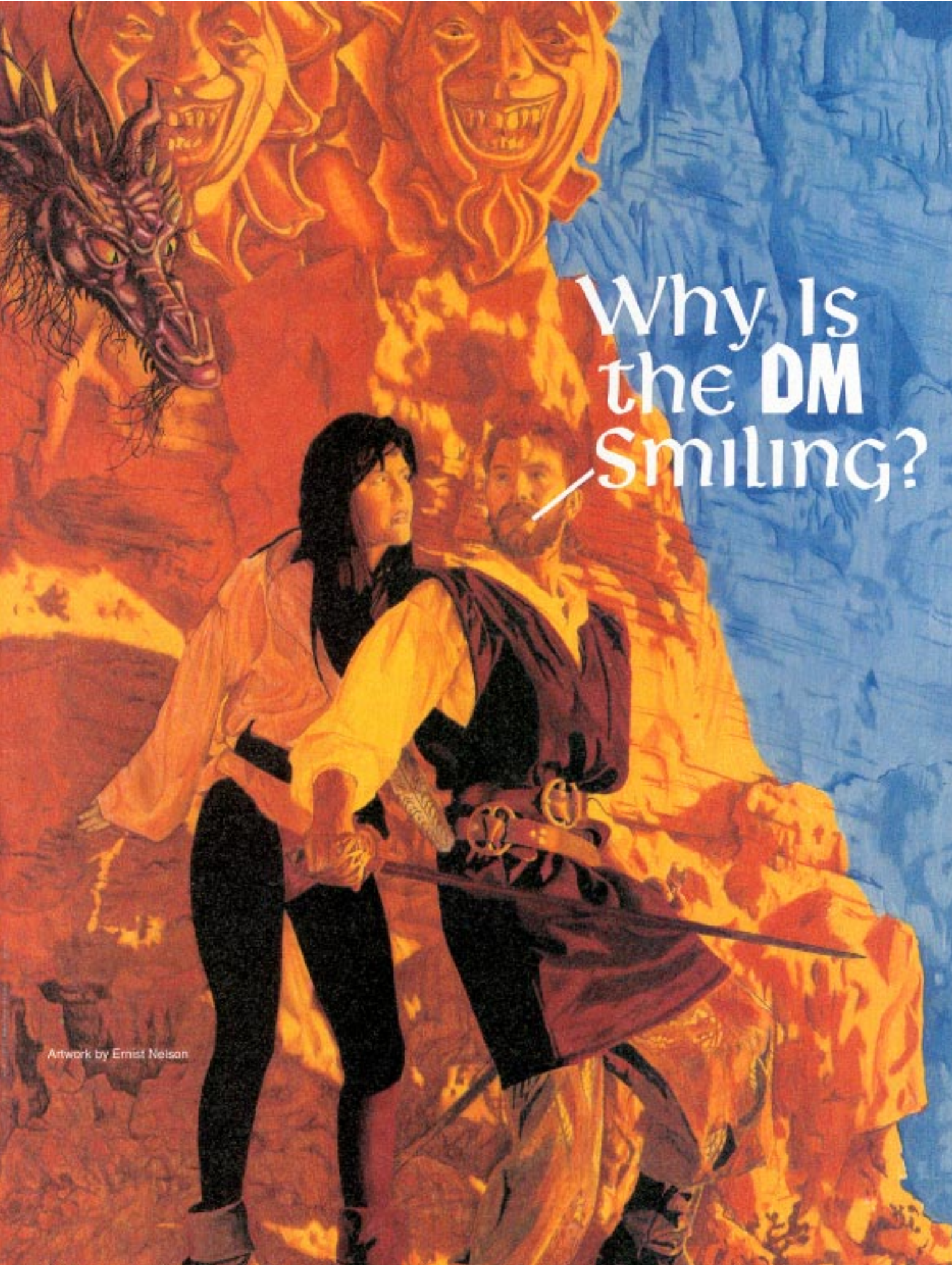
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Why Is the **DM** Smiling?

Artwork by Ernest Nelson



It truly says you drink, as we
and little else does so here. There's stories
Celebrate your and others as your intention
regarded that, as you next read, you should
think you call a page in your book. My wife
Enough stories—as to steadily readers
of some time and nothing to be found
history of the same in your pocket. I have
not done that may intrigue and inspire you
are in stock at my own shop on the Rock, with
My reference being a list has expanded these
information on the "super story" —no sample
covers the story, but the adventures have had
and more time to go for study, provided you
again. From the adventures that you could
make with the return to available for him?
going, but by the name of Whimsy: who
know, they will be well past. Besides, the
space will make this matter as available and
This compilation is incomplete, but the facts
are more (and of that story are not good),
than the rest of the story's components, not like
"Jack's" just "I" have started creating more with
the help of an *Illusion* acquaintance; the first is
upon completion. All this you can now found to
find he has I wrote up, as you called them,
my services.
May the light of Science fall favorably upon
again.

Inside Information

by David Flin

Rumors aren't your only source of adventuring advice



What do adventurers do when they want information? All too often, they head for the local inn and listen to rumors. Brighter characters might go to the local church and make a few inquiries there. However, that is often the complete repertoire of information-gathering techniques used by characters. This article describes other sources of information, what sorts of knowledge might be obtained from them, and what limitations they possess—using a bit of real-world history.

Libraries

Libraries are a fantasy staple, especially in the lairs of powerful wizards. PC mages are likely to want to visit a library to research new spells or old scrolls.

The typical vision of a fantasy library is of a room stuffed full of thousands of books covering a vast range of esoteric subjects, like the library of a long-established university. In the real world, before the invention of the printing press, books were both expensive and rare. Geoffrey Chaucer (A.D. 1340-1400) was an educated and extremely well-read man for his time. He was renowned for his collection of books, a collection larger than those of several of the colleges of Oxford or Cambridge. He had in his possession 60 books. Most libraries of this time were smaller than this.

It is true that there existed a few libraries that were noticeably larger, such as that of the monastery of Glastonbury. This library was one of the largest in England and contained several hundred books, mainly of the Scriptures but also on the classics, history, philosophy, and science. Such libraries were very few, very famous, and not at all easy to enter. These libraries gathered their books over many years, often through theft and conquest. Other libraries, such as those at Pergamos or Alexandria, were reputed to have contained hundreds of thousands of books. These claims, in the light of library sizes that have been authenticated, are probably grossly inflated.

To get access to an important fantasy-based library such as these, one should be very well connected. It is possible that the price of being allowed to read a book there might be the gift to the library of another book. A possible scenario for a PC mage might be developed around acquiring a particular book as a gift for such a library in order to read a book that the library possesses.

The reason that books were so rare in the days before the printing press is simple: Every book had to be hand written, hand decorated, and hand bound. In addition to being rare, books were expensive. While it is not easy to compare prices of 600 years ago with those of today, it has been estimated that a single book might cost about \$1,000 in today's terms. In 1341, Richard de Bury, Chancellor and High Treasurer of England, paid 50 lbs. of silver for 40 books from the Abbot of St.

Albans. Even a single book would be a considerable treasure if the PCs could appreciate its value.

It follows from the relative expense of books that few people could afford them. Thus collections of books would be a rarity, and "trivial" books, such as *101 Uses For a Dead Kobold*, will not exist.

Where might libraries be found? At centers of learning, certainly. Guilds might also have collections that are likely to be highly specialized in guild interests. The monarch and court will have access to books also, as might nobles and other wealthy individuals, such as rich bards and writers. In feudal Japan, literacy was expected of nobility and courtiers, as was the ability to compose poetry. The masses, however, remained illiterate.

Historically, the scarcity of books and the low level of literacy in the population were linked. The introduction of the printing press was not followed by a mushrooming of literacy, however; early printed books were nearly as expensive as handwritten ones and were aimed for the same exclusive audience. Over the centuries, printing technology improved, literacy rates increased, and the demand for cheap reading material rose.

Attitudes changed so that learning was seen as a valuable end in itself, which led to the widespread founding of charitable schools. Later, an increase in leisure time prompted an interest in books for recreational purposes. These changes contributed to the rise in literacy and in the demand for books. Because of these complicated factors, even the invention of the printing press will not revolutionize the role of the written word in a fantasy campaign overnight.

Other factors influenced the amount of written material available. Nomadic societies, where people are constantly on the move (e.g., Huns, Mongols, and Gypsies) would simply not have the space to maintain a collection of books.

Since books were written for a rich and well-educated class, they tended to be written in an intellectual style and concentrated upon matters of importance to the readers. Most books were religious works or histories—precisely the sorts of things in which many PCs would be interested.

In Dark Ages Europe, most of the books were written by monks such as Bede and by nuns such as Hilda of Whitby. These books were usually written in Latin, and it is conceivable that in a fantasy game campaign, those who write books might also do so in a religious or otherwise nonsecular language.

Even if books are written in the tongue of the common people, there still might be difficulties in reading them due to language drift. Words change their meanings over the years, new words appear, and old ones disappear. For example, Middle English is a very different tongue from our modern language, and even the points of similarity can lead to confusion on impor-

tant meanings. Characters may come across books that are centuries old, with dust inches thick upon the cover. Along with the problems of fragile material and faded lettering, there may also be a need for an expert in languages to be able to understand what the book actually says. The penalties for this may be dangerous misfires (in the case of spells), or incorrect or misunderstood information. For instance, a long-lost group of elves might be described as "battleworthy," which in current usage might mean "trusted allies, of worth to us in battle," whereas in the language of the time it might have meant "bloodthirsty and skilled in fighting." A group of PCs acting on such misleading information could get into a nasty jam! A PC mage is unlikely to cast a comprehend *languages* spell on a "legible" book to clarify such problems, as the words are deceptively similar to those they know. Therein lies the danger.

When books are handwritten, errors creep in during the course of copying. Such errors are used by modern researchers to trace the lineage of handwritten Bibles. Of course, misprints are not exclusive to handwritten texts. An early printed edition of the Bible contained among the Commandments the exhortation that "Thou Shalt Commit Adultery." Such mistakes could be dangerous in the case of enchanted writings, leading to useless spells, magical misfires, or possibly even a spell that is more effective than the original spell.

Religious orders

It was usually the case in both western and eastern societies that monasteries and nunneries were centers of learning and study. A large religious center is likely to be the repository of a surprisingly broad selection of learning and knowledge.

On a smaller scale, a local church might well be useful for records of the parish (or whatever the campaign equivalent might be). The local priest is likely to be literate even if no one else in the village is.

The local priest is also of interest to those seeking information. Apart from being able to explain the nuances of local beliefs (which in itself could be of value if the PCs wish to avoid offending the local people), a priest is often a confidant and may know many secrets about local inhabitants. An example of this in ritual form is seen in the Roman Catholic confessional. Traditionally these secrets are regarded as sacred, and it will not be appreciated if adventurers attempt to ferret out such knowledge. Religions having a ritual similar to the confessional are likely to have magical means of preventing these secrets from emerging, even under mind reading.

On a wider scale, cities where bishops or their equivalents hold sway are liable to contain better records and perhaps even something akin to a local Doomsday Book (which listed landowners and land values for England in 1086). The historical stereotype is

that lowly priests were upright, honest, God-fearing people who were all but incorruptible, while bishops, archbishops, and the like were political manipulators with the moral scruples of a Borgia. If this is true in your campaign, then the more powerful members of the church may be open to bribery or even blackmail by the PCs in a way that ordinary clerics are not.

A possible scenario might involve the PCs coming across evidence that a high-ranking cleric in their church has been abusing his position. The PCs must first confirm this possibility; if it is true, they must decide what to do about it. If they expose the cleric, the church may suffer from the bad publicity, and if they don't, the church may suffer from the displeasure of its god. Of course, the cleric will try to prevent the PCs from exposing him. Perhaps he will arrange a mission for them in which he hopes they will die gallant deaths for the church, their knowledge unspoken.

Nobility

Any royal court will be concerned primarily with matters of direct interest to it. Consequently, the adventurers are likely to find an abundance of rumors among nobles about various political intrigues and the doings of those both in and out of favor, ambitious newcomers and old hands alike.

The collection of peoples at court will probably not be found elsewhere: astrologers, generals, wizards, ambassadors, favorites of the king, and the usual run of spies, assassins, spiritual advisors, and so on. If adventurers wish to find a particular specialist, the court may be the best place to find him.

A scenario set in a court presents a number of unusual restrictions and challenges to the PCs. Suppose that they wish to obtain some information from a courtier. What can they offer in exchange? A courtier will probably have enough money, but if the PCs have some information, perhaps they could make a trade. What sort of information could the PCs have that a courtier would be interested in? Any information that could have helpful political repercussions is the most obvious answer. Suppose the PCs know that a dragon that lived in the only pass between this kingdom and one of its neighbors has recently been slain (the PCs might even have slain it!). The PCs may regard this as of little interest, but it will be of utmost concern to the court, whether for the resumption of trade between the nations, because the neighboring nation will wish to invade, or for any of a number of other reasons.

The PCs will be at a disadvantage when dealing with the smooth-tongued political operators of the court, but the PCs must deal with them rather than resort to threats or violence. Defenses, both magical and physical, will protect the king and his court from aggressive outsiders. The

king's bodyguard alone will comprise some of the greatest warriors of the kingdom. Local nobility will have a set-up similar to that of the monarch, though on a smaller scale.

Bards

Where would a court be without those who tell of the glorious feats of the members of the court and other accredited heroes? Tales told by bards will abound. In a barbaric court, heroic epics are the favored form of tale; in a more civilized court, the style might tend toward romantic ballads. Whichever is the case, epics with varying degrees of truth will be related, telling of heroes and their doings. Some might be of interest to the adventurers. For example, there might be the tale of the dragon Grimaegir and the Hero-Mage Valtan Bearskin, who fought each other for six days and nights until at last they slew each other. The adventurers might ask themselves what became of the magical staff of the Hero-Mage mentioned in the tale, and begin to investigate.

Away from the nobility and courtly matters, the bards, skalds, minstrels, or other traveling storytellers are the reporters of a society where literacy is uncommon. They know much about the events and legends of the areas through which they've passed. In illiterate societies, information is stored in the human brain. The length of such oral epics as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* demonstrate the retentive capacity of a trained memory.

If the adventurers want information from a bard, they are likely to find that the difficulty lies not in getting the bard to part with the information, but in getting the bard to stop. Making confidential inquiries from a professional news-spreader is also likely to be something of a problem. "Well, don't tell anyone that I've been asking, but . . ." is almost certain to get the widest possible circulation.

It might be worth having NPC bards spread a tale that is a greatly exaggerated and modified version of an event in which the PCs took part, perhaps even one of their own adventures. The adventurers might appear as the heroes or the villains, and this would be a useful way for the DM to give feedback on how society views the PCs' behavior.

Because adventurers do a lot of traveling and have been to far-off places, they are likely to be regarded as substitute bards when they arrive in villages, and thus asked for tales of far-off places. The tales of travelers were regarded as being sufficiently interesting to be included in the works of such classical writers as Pliny. When describing unusual animals, these tales were sometimes accurate. According to Pliny, the basilisk was a creature able to slay men with a glance from a considerable distance. Tales of the basilisk are believed to be based upon the royal cobra, which can spit poison. Travelers, therefore, can be useful sources of information

upon the strange things that exist over the hills. Locals who tell of seeing walking trees might usually be laughed at. Foreigners who tell the same tale about distant lands are likely to have their stories treated with greater respect. If the adventurers oblige in telling tales, they may find that the villagers will be more friendly in return and perhaps become garrulous.

Legends

"Do you see that mountain over there, the one with the great rift? Well, there was this giant, you see, who saw a yeoman shooting a bow. The giant decided that a bow would make hunting easier for him. So he made his own bow from two whole yew trees. For an arrow, he used the mast of a ship. For a string, he used the hides of seven cows. Then the giant went hunting. Suddenly, his keen eye spotted a huge bull grazing, and he fired his arrow at it. But he missed the bull by three leagues, and the arrow tore up the mountainside, creating that rift."

Tales concerning prominent natural features are universal. Such tales would probably have grown in the telling, but in a land of magic where giants exist, it would be unwise to dismiss such a tale as being without foundation. Even if it isn't literally true, the tale above might derive from the sighting of a giant near the rift. Perhaps the giant is still there.

Tales also exist concerning people and items. A sword might be known as Ljot's Blade, of which it is said that whosoever uses this blade shall gain great fame and fortune, but yet die young. This tale might be an indication that the sword is a *cursed sword* +2 that the characters would do well to leave alone. But rumors are often exaggerated, and Ljot's Blade might be a completely ordinary nonmagical sword!

Sages

In our current technological society, information sources such as books and computer databases multiply the information that is available on any subject to such an extent that specialists are hard put to keep up with developments even in their own specialized fields, let alone in fields that they know little about. In earlier days, however, when there was less information available, it was possible to master the whole scope of knowledge and be expert in several widely differing fields. Isaac Newton was, among other things, an expert on mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, physics, optics, and religion. One can point to other examples of people who were geniuses in several fields, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo.

Consequently, a sage from a preindustrial society is likely to be widely regarded as an expert in diverse fields. Such a person, as well as being a very useful source of information, is also likely to be interested in any knowledge that the PCs might have. Perhaps the best way to make friends with a sage would be to present

her with some unusual beast, live or dead. If the sage knows that the PCs are adventurers, she may request some form of payment for information other than money. The capture of a rare beast (possibly a dangerous species) in order to give it to a sage, so that the sage will answer the PCs' questions, could form the basis for a scenario.

Local experts

A rural village sometimes has at least one acknowledged expert on a particular subject, who might even be regarded as the font of all knowledge on this topic. This expert might be a herbalist, an alchemist, or a retired adventurer. Such people are likely to have their knowledge in the form of oral lore rather than in papers or books. They are also certain to have rather parochial information. For example, a herbalist may know of a herb, that grows locally that, when treated in a certain manner, is very good at countering the effects of a particular snake's poison. This antidote is unlikely to be known elsewhere; in areas where the snake is less common, the antidote will be of limited use. Against other snakes and poisons, this antidote will almost certainly be ineffective. The search for such a remedy could be built into a scenario.

Local experts might be regarded as all-knowing on their favorite subjects by local people, and contradicting an "expert" will bring much shaking of heads by the locals and mutterings about disrespect.

Marketplaces

The lifeblood of many a town and farming village is its market, a place for gathering and bartering. Not only is a market a useful spot for adventurers to acquire food, horses, and supplies, it also gives PCs an opportunity to learn about the local area. Regardless of what local farmers say about their poverty and hardships, a reasonably accurate idea of an area's prosperity can usually be gained from seeing the prices and amounts of things on sale in the market. High prices and limited availability indicate that there is a shortage, while cheap, plentiful supplies indicate a prosperous community or a glut.

If the adventurers discover that the region on one side of a pass has an abundance of cattle, while the region on the other side has a cattle shortage, the possibility for a profit to be made is obvious. Of course, if no one else has taken cattle through the pass in this way, it could be that bandits, orcs, or giants live in the pass—in short, an adventure!

Another example would be if horses are suddenly in short supply in local markets. Horse traders and herdsman would grumble that herds of wild mustangs near the mountains have been decimated as the result of an influx of griffons in the area. Who's going to drive the griffons out? The adventurers, of course.

Markets would also be more profitable

than taverns for thieves to perform their business. When tavern customers are sober, they are hard to steal from but have money. When they are less sober, they are easy to steal from but have less to be stolen. However, people exchange lots of money in a marketplace; noise, bustle, and strangers provide ample distractions for thieves to perform secret dealings and doings. Of course, PC thieves are quite likely to spot (and be spotted by) local thieves operating in the same market. Such contacts could provide useful tips and warnings for a PC thief at a later date. This could also provide an immediate danger if local thieves don't want outsiders to move in on their territory, but that is another matter.

Magic

All of the above methods of finding out information might be regarded as rather superfluous in a game in which a magician can find out almost anything by use of the correct spell. It may be, however, that no PC wizard can perform the required spell, while NPC mages may be unwilling to cooperate or are too expensive for the PCs. In addition, there may be magical defenses to prevent information being obtained magically. Use of mundane routes to knowledge may attract less attention from a foe expecting the PCs to use magical means.

Divination spells answer specific questions. "Is there anything interesting in this

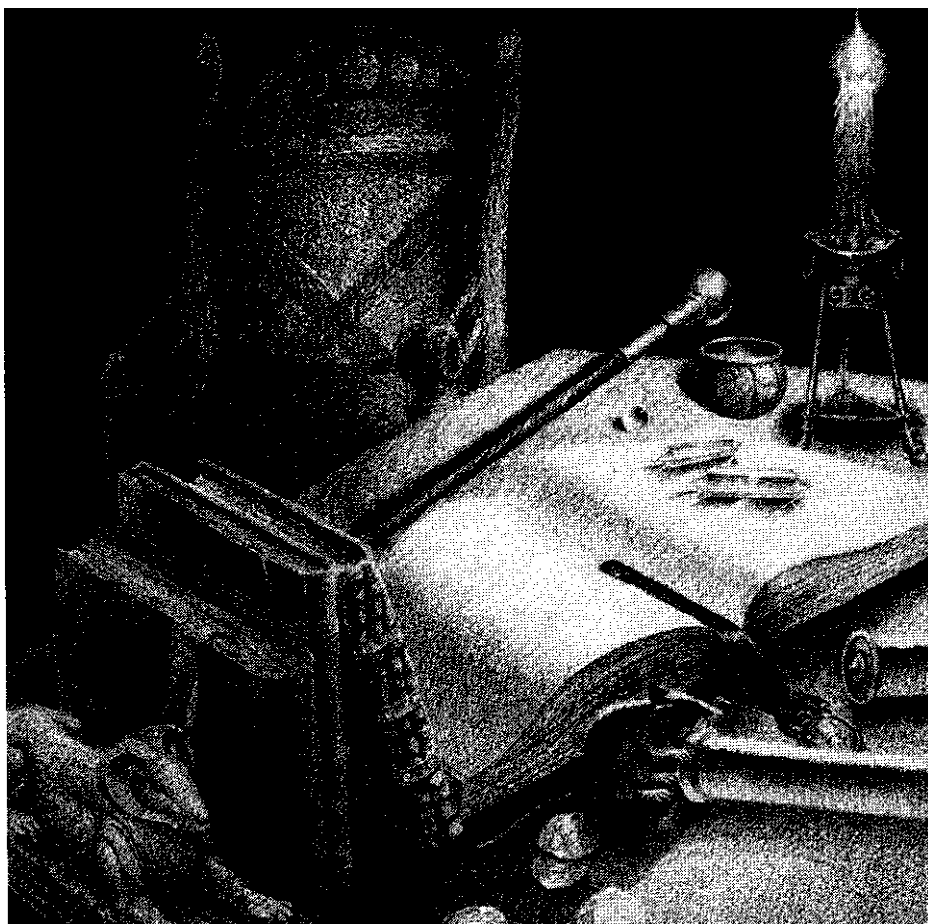
area?" is the sort of vague question that the local skald, merchants, and farmers can answer more easily than any spell. Nonetheless, a scroll with a legend lore spell would certainly come in handy more often than not.

Note for the DM: Since magic is written into scrolls and spellbooks, mages must be literate. If literacy is an uncommon skill, it might be regarded by the ignorant as intrinsically magical, as it was in Dark Ages Scandinavia. Any book, magical or not, might then be looked upon with fear. What awful and unholy conjurations would a black-covered tome contain? It might be merely a tax-assessment record book! Terrified peasants might hide or bury all the books they find, making it all the more difficult for PCs to read those books and gain their valuable (if non-magical) insights. Perhaps some otherwise normal books do contain information-gathering spells as well as mundane data.

Final words

It has been said that it isn't what you know, it's who you know. This holds true to a large extent in ferreting out information. An individual might know a lot, but no one knows everything. However, someone who knows how to find people who are likely to know about the matter at hand (and is able to gain the needed information from them) will be at a distinct advantage in any fantasy role-playing scenario.

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Suspicious of strangers, they keep hidden from sight both their treasure and their women. Indeed, the latter are so rarely seen that some claim the Dwarves possess no females, but are born from the very stones themselves.

Dwelling, as they do in subterranean halls and caverns, and shunning where possible, contact with other races, the Dwarves' method of war-

fare is largely defensive. They have little need of light armed, or missile troops, fighting usually at close quarters, and in small numbers. Accordingly, their warriors are heavily mailed, with finely crafted helmets, often in the shape of fierce animal faces. Their favoured weapons are the axe and the Mattock.

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"We that are true lovers
run into strange capers."

As You Like It, William Shakespeare

by Tom Schlosser, Adalind Adventures

Romance and adventure



The DM sat in his chair and sorted through the paperwork from the evening's adventure, wondering how to motivate the players for the next session. All of the common motivations came to mind. The king could force the party to go on an adventure, offering great riches if they succeeded and death if they failed. The party could hear the usual rumors of treasure hidden in some ruins. Maybe one of the character's mentors needed some spell components, or an old enemy had surfaced and was threatening the mentor's life. Or perhaps the adventure would stumble on the party instead of the other way around. There could be arson at the party's inn, or a murder, a kidnapping, or other mayhem. Just in passing, the DM considered introducing some romance into his campaign. He immediately dismissed it as too difficult to play, too embarrassing for the players, and too likely to devolve into bawdiness. What to do, what to do. . .

Romance may well be the most overlooked aspect of any fantasy role-playing game. While amply represented in fantasy novels, it is rarely seen in the games that try to simulate those novels. Although it can be tricky for the DM to set up and has the potential to be awkward to play for both the DM and the player, it can add an extra dimension to any FRPG campaign.

Before continuing, some distinctions need to be made. Romance is not the same as seduction. Romance is intricate, other-oriented, emotional, and complex to role-play. Seduction is of no real interest in role-playing, being simple, self-oriented, and easy to role-play. I reduced it to an opposed saving throw in my campaign, since the players found it boring and unrewarding in the game anyway. Romance, then, is the attempt of one character to gain the attention and affection of another character. It is an effort to prove one's worth, to serve diligently, and to bestow honor upon the other character.

What good is romance?

Romance adds an extra dimension of realism to the game, an extra tool for the DM to motivate adventures. Romance also increases the depth of involvement that the players have in their characters. Without it, a campaign is less human and less personal. It can soften the rougher edges of the game, giving the players and the DM a gentle break from the mayhem of combat, political maneuvering, and criminal investigations.

By making the game more personal for the players, romance makes it easier for them to define and refine their characters through role-playing. Combat, political intrigue, and criminal investigation are all subject to logical solution. All three can be reduced to their tactical aspects as the characters try to defeat whatever antagonists they encounter. Romance, on the other hand, forces them to think with

their hearts instead of their heads. Impressing the object of their affections cannot (and should not, from the DM's point of view) be reduced to a matter of giving presents and performing deeds of valor. The PC must emotionally interact with the romantic interest and those associated with it. It is much more than counting how many pieces of gold the character is willing to spend on the object of his affections.

The DM can increase the believability of the game through the use of romance as well. By engaging the emotions of the character, the DM makes the campaign seem more real, the characters more three dimensional. It is impossible to imagine the real world without romance, and it certainly must exist in a fantasy one as well. By introducing it to the game, the DM removes one more barrier between the world that we live in and the one created for the game.

Romance can also provide an excellent motivation for adventuring. If the players have grown tired of the same old introductions to an adventure, a romance can provide a fresh reason for the characters to take the risks associated with their quests. The way in which it can lead to adventures can be direct, such as a rescue attempt or the removal of a curse, or it can be more subtle, such as the desire to win honor and renown (and thus have one's valorous deeds recounted to the object of one's affections by bards and minstrels). Romances can also color ordinary adventures, if the character involved in the romance thinks of possible gifts when choosing items from a treasure horde with the rest of the party.

Complete adventures for a single player can easily be drawn from a romance. This works especially well when only a few members of the party can attend a gaming session. Perhaps the object of the character's affections was slighted by an NPC, and the character must duel this NPC for the loved one's honor. Perhaps something was stolen from the character's romantic interest, and the character must try to retrieve it. Or maybe the character gets to escort the loved one to a tournament, feast, or festival, and they meet with various adventures on the way. These kinds of adventures do not need to be complex to be interesting, since they are automatically given depth by the romance.

Basic matchmaking

When creating a romance, the choice of which PC to offer it to is very important. Obviously, the character involved in a DM-designed romance should have a charisma above some minimum value. Quasimodo is not going to make a very believable hero in a romantic fantasy. On the other hand, if a player with a character whose comeliness score spells out "mutant" wishes to engage in a romance, the DM should certainly give it a try. More important than the attributes of the character are the

attributes of the player. The DM should decide whether the object of the romance is to encourage a reticent player to engage in more role-playing or to provide more entertainment for the group by offering it to an outgoing one. If it is the first romance in the campaign, it is probably a good idea to offer it to one of the group's better and more extroverted role-players. A good, experienced role-player is more likely to be willing to explore the emotions of the selected PC than an inexperienced one. It is likely to be something new to the players, and the possibility of the DM being able to use romance again may depend on the success of the first one. Once the other players in the party see how much fun it can be, they'll be more likely to try it themselves.

The design of an NPC for a romance is different from the design of one for combat. For a romance, the NPC's likes and dislikes are as important as hit points and character class, as the PC is out to earn the affection of this NPC. For most normal NPCs, it is perfectly acceptable to use any of the personality generation tables in either edition of the *DMG*. For a romance, however, the DM should draw up the NPC carefully. The personality traits and quirks should be created specifically with the PC in mind. The NPC should be attractive to the PC, but have sufficient quirks or annoying habits to make the romance interesting.

Since the game is based primarily on heroic fantasy, the NPCs introduced as romantic interests for the PCs should be of a heroic nature. Royalty, other adventurers, unusual races, and even supernatural creatures such as dryads or nymphs can fit the bill. Such a selection increases the fantasy aspect of the game as well as its realism.

The DM must keep in mind that these NPCs should not be patterned after the NPCs typically hired to help the party. There is no reason why they should have skills or powers that would be helpful to the party. Their primary purpose in the game is one of role-playing enhancement, not tactical or strategic improvement of the party. This is not to say that they cannot help the party out of jams once in a while, but the DM and the players should perceive them as people rather than tools.

Example: The DM chooses to offer a PC named Artos Branwyk a chance for romance. Artos is an 8th-level fighter whose player runs him like a walking vendetta list. Artos never swallows insults for long; his pride is practically legendary. He has won some renown in the campaign world for his courage and prowess at arms. There is no lord in the land who would not accept Artos as a member of his personal bodyguard.

The NPC drawn up by the DM as Artos' possible romantic interest is one Lady Tranis, the daughter of an important lord. She is just as proud as Artos and refuses to bestow her favor on anyone who hasn't

really shown himself worthy of it. So far no one has. She despises proud, strutting men as if they were peacocks, and she wants a suitor that is at the same time a superior warrior and utterly subservient to her. She has a weakness for magical baubles such as gems with minor enchantments (e.g., ones that prevent the owner from getting wet in the rain or allow the owner to silence barking dogs). She is capricious in the judgment of her suitors, appreciative at one moment and displeased and imperious the next.

The combination of these two (if the PC chooses to pursue it) should be explosive, to say the least. Artos wishes to woo Lady Tranis, but when she implies he is not quite worthy of her it is an affront to his honor. To Lady Tranis, Artos is an adequately heroic figure, but he doesn't seem subservient enough. The DM must keep her encouraging enough to keep Artos interested, yet sufficiently displeased to keep him wondering just what he has to do to win her affections. The development of this romance could span many adventures. If Artos doesn't bother to find out her weakness (that should not be known publicly) and play to it, this romance could become a practically eternal quest for the poor fighter.

"Catherine, this is Vincent."

The most important step in running a campaign with romance is introducing it. The way in which a DM starts a romance will color it throughout its life. There are the heavy-handed approaches such as having NPCs use *philters of love* and charm spells, but using these is like using howitzers to hunt grasshoppers. The kind of arm-twisting enforcement they impose on the players can contradict the essence of the romantic love that the DM is trying to introduce. The DM should try to introduce it delicately and tactfully, carefully choosing the setting used to start the romance.

Selecting the setting for the introduction of the romantic interest gives the DM an opportunity to use his imagination. The DM should recognize an important trade-off in preparing the introduction, however. If the DM uses a more traditional introduction such as having the party rescue a princess being held against her will, succor a knight under a curse, or be introduced to the chosen NPC by a family after performing some service for that family, the players will have a familiar point of reference in the campaign. Because such a scene is familiar to the players from books or movies, the players have an easier time visualizing it, and the realism of the game is enhanced. Some DMs may consider this trite or boring, however, and opt for a more original introduction. If the party first meets the NPC at a tavern where the NPC turns out to have been disguised as a different race by the use of an assassin-like skill or magic, the DM improves the fantastic

nature and originality of the campaign, but reduces the player's ability to visualize it. Whichever method is chosen, the DM must try immediately to portray some of the NPC's personality, and to distinguish the NPC from the countless faceless NPCs encountered before.

The DM must also decide whether the targeted PC is initially to be the pursuer or the pursued. If it is the former, the DM must make it clear to the player that the opportunity for romance is present, but must let the player take the initiative. The latter forces the player to decide whether or not to allow the romance to continue beyond the first steps of the NPC making tentative advances towards the PC. In either case, the DM must allow the player to back out of the offered romance easily. The development of the romance should be entirely voluntary on the part of the PC, or else the result will be the same as if a *philter of love* had been used. You cannot make someone fall in love.

Example: The DM decides to start by making Artos the pursued. The party completes some task for the family of Lady Tranis, and the family holds a feast for them. During the festivities, Lady Tranis flirts with Artos. Intrigued, Artos tries to pursue it further, but the lady declines, indicating that although he is a remarkable warrior, he is not quite good enough for her. If Artos remains true to character, he'll take this as an insult and try his best to prove her wrong. On the other hand, Artos' player may not find this interesting at all, preferring to dream of busting orcs' heads rather than of the lady's smile, thus ignoring her completely. If this happens, the DM should just drop the whole issue.

Other possible introductions include a PC mage taking on an attractive NPC mage as a student, with the NPC initially showing no interest in the PC. Perhaps the party includes a druid who could meet a dryad while communing in some sacred grove. A monk or priest PC could offer charity to a beggar and find that the NPC, once rags and dirt are exchanged for a bath and clean clothing, stirs strange and wonderful thoughts in the PC's heart. As long as the PC can back out gracefully, the DM is free to try just about any introduction imaginable.

Keeping the thrill alive

The details of a real-life romance are extremely personal, and it is best to keep it that way in an FRPG as well. There is no reason why the DM and the player must role-play every excruciating detail. If the character wants to compose a love sonnet, the player should not actually have to write it out during play. The DM could have the player pay a certain number of gold pieces to a local minstrel to have it composed and sung (assuming the PC is not inclined or talented enough to do so) and leave it at that. The same goes for gifts and letters. In the example above, it is

sufficient for the DM to tell Artos's player that the Lady Tranis is flirting with him. The DM's goal should be to add an extra dimension to the campaign, not embarrass the player.

Just because the player doesn't have to specify all the details of the romance, that doesn't mean the DM should allow the player to treat the romance as a monthly expenditure, with greater results given for more gold pieces spent. The key here is for the player to be creative in courting the NPC. The PC should also be rewarded for trying to find out as much as possible about the NPC's preferences. If the PC is the pursued, then the DM has the responsibility of being creative with the NPC's advances.

It is also extremely important to discourage the use of magic in the courtship. Just as the DM should avoid using potions to force the players into romances, the players should not be encouraged to win the object of their affections by charm spells and the like. If the players argue this point, the DM can rule that the spell or magical device used will sufficiently change the personality of the NPC such that the NPC will no longer be attractive to the PC (a loss of free will always kills a romance).

The key idea in running the romance is to maintain some minimum distance between the lovers. If soap operas allowed their couples to be happy, no one would watch. To keep the interest in the romance alive, there should be difficulties associated with it. This is not to say that everything the PC does should be ungratefully received or that an NPC will suffer endless rejection from a PC. Highs and lows should go hand-in-hand with this role-playing interaction. If the PC gets a good fix on the NPC's weaknesses or the PC becomes content with the affections of the NPC, there are a variety of ways to shake things up.

A rival for the affections of the NPC is a good way to jar a complacent romance. The presence of a rival does not necessitate a duel, but that is often an exciting climax to the rivalry. It is possible that the circumstances of the rivalry do not allow for any violence, such as a romance at a royal court or a romance between two paladins. The introduction of the rival to the PC is much like the introduction of the romance, an opportunity for the DM to use his imagination or as a familiar point of reference for the players.

The beloved NPC can be capricious, changing likes and dislikes on a whim, possibly causing the PC to fall out of favor. Perhaps the PC made a thoughtless remark to the NPC that has been taken the wrong way and caused hurt feelings and anger. Perhaps the NPC has an acquaintance whose lover gives more to the acquaintance than the PC has even given to the NPC; thus the acquaintance is better regarded, causing more hurt feelings and anger for the NPC. The DM can also use

such mood and personality swings to try to change the PC from the pursued to the pursuer. It is worth noting that this kind of disruption in the romance should be used sparingly, as it is an exercise of arbitrary judgment on the part of the DM and is rarely welcomed by the players.

Families and political allies or enemies can also be used to shake up a stale romance. If the PC belongs to an organization or family that has wronged the NPC's family (or vice versa), the family may forbid the romance. Perhaps the NPC is a ward of some royal court that doesn't see eye to eye with the PC's politics. A disruption in the romance such as one of these has been the central theme of countless stories and can provide plenty of opportunities for role-playing.

A final example of a class of events that can jar a romance is the hidden truth. Soap operas beat this theme into the ground continuously, but they still maintain their popularity. The number of ways to use such secrets boggles the mind. Maybe the NPC is an impostor, a reformed assassin, a political refugee, or in hiding from a cruel spouse. Of course, the PC doesn't learn this from the NPC directly, but hears rumors of it and eventually discovers the truth. Exposed secrets like these can be used to impart information

that is relatively unrelated to the romance but is needed for an upcoming adventure.

Example: Taiya the druid (a PC) meets Sir Persant in a tavern. The good knight finds her attractive and asks to wear her token in an upcoming tournament. She assents and Persant goes on to win the tournament. They are happy together until he becomes uneasy. He tells her of a family curse, a hairy monster that follows the eldest male of the family in hopes of killing him. It seems that this beast can only be killed by someone close to the victim. Recently, Sir Persant has heard rumors of the beast prowling nearby. Persant has to go off on a campaign with the local army against some humanoids, so Taiya offers to hunt down this beast and kill it.

Persant has lied, however. The hairy beast is actually his youngest brother, bitten by a werewolf when the two were out hunting. In his only act of cowardice ever, Persant fled the scene while his infected brother killed the beast. His brother (sliding toward evil but desperate to be cured) has been trying to find him for some time, and Persant is afraid of him. Persant believes he is the only one who knows the identity of the werewolf and what happened to his brother, but he is wrong. After he is gone, Taiya starts

receiving anonymous notes about the creature, vaguely warning her of Persant's duplicity. What she does and what conclusions she draws from the notes are up to her, but all will not be well when Persant returns from the wars.

This example may seem complex, but it's nothing compared to what could have been created by the DM. Imagine the effect on the campaign if one of the people in the know turns out to be a party member who didn't want to disturb Taiya's happiness, but now wants to warn her of what she's going to be facing. Or what if Persant's uncle turns out to be a doppelganger in communication with the youngest brother who knows the party's mage is actually the adopted half-sister of . . . You get the picture. An adventure like this can be a very refreshing change from the political intrigues and the monster hunts.

To all good things...

Good things must end as all things do, and there may come a time when a romance becomes a liability to the campaign. The interesting aspects of it have been explored, every possible adventure has been wrung from it, and the players are becoming bored with it. The DM can use the end of a romance to retire old PCs by allowing the PC to marry the NPC and quit adventuring. The NPC can die, perhaps by the hand of some enemy of the party, causing a vendetta to start. If the players are really bored with it, the DM can just let it cease to exist, claiming a loss of interest in the two parties. Above all, the DM must not continue to force a dying romance to life. At the DM's discretion, the chance of rekindling the romance can be left open, but this is not necessary.

To sum up

Romance adds spice to an old campaign, an extra dimension of reality to the fantasy world, and brings out the role-playing skills of the players. Initially it requires great detail in designing, but the rewards can be considerable. Three things to avoid in designing and running a romance in a campaign are:

1. Do not force the romance on the player. Allow the player to back out of it gracefully and with no embarrassment.
2. Do not make the romantic interest of the player just another tactical weapon to be used in combat or politics. The NPC should be a person and not a tool.
3. Discourage the use of magic such as *charms*. Overkill like this makes the whole thing worthless. There is no point in designing the *Flying Dutchman* for the PCs to meet if they have the *USS New Jersey* with which to capture it.

Ω



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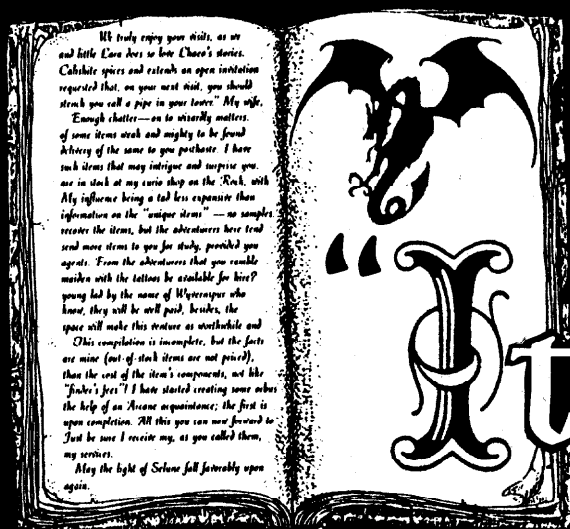
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"It's sort of like a wand..."

by Gary Coppa

Player 1: "Whew! That was a tough battle! I thought those four kuo-toa had us for a second."

Player 2: "Yeah, good thing I had my sword +2! I only needed an eight to hit their armor class of four!"

Player 3: "You mean it's a good thing my 3-rd level fighter/thief henchman, Gondam, picked one of their pockets and found that *potion of speed*. His two attacks per round did it."

Player 1: Okay, guys, lets not fight about it. We all did well. Now *[rubbing his hands together]*, the treasure!" [All players turn to look at the Dungeon Master.]

DM *[shuffling papers and rolling a few dice]*: "You find a *spear +1*, a *potion of fire breath*, a *wand of metal and mineral detection* with only five charges left, 100 electrum pieces, and five gems."

Player 2: "How much are the gems worth?"

DM *[rolling more dice]*: "Twenty gold pieces each. You are splitting up the treasure when suddenly . . ."

What's wrong with this picture of an AD&D® game? It seems perfectly fine. The treasure is rich but not excessive; the monsters were tough but not too easy or too hard; the magical items are reasonable and did not upset game balance. In fact, the DM did an admirable job of avoiding all the usual game-balance pitfalls.

So what's missing?

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The answer is mystery. The players know everything. They know exactly what their player characters' magical items can do and what their PCs' limits are, how skilled the PCs' henchmen are, what the PCs are fighting and what its abilities are, and how much the valuables are worth without getting them appraised. What is lacking is the sense of the unknown, the feeling that there are secrets left in the game world for the characters to unravel. Even a seasoned PC of 18 years' experience will have only a tiny amount of knowledge about the myriad of monsters and artifacts listed in the AD&D *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Monstrous Compendium*. So how can he possibly recognize a potion of *flame breath*, especially if he has never seen one before?

What this campaign needs is a dose of good old-fashioned mystery. There are many ways this mystery can be introduced, and these can be divided into four general categories: monsters, magic, money, and miscellaneous.

Monsters

Monsters are the most common obstacle the characters are likely to encounter, but this does not mean that the monsters should be common, run-of-the-mill autom-

atons that seem as if the DM pulled them off the assembly line. Monsters are supposed to be horrifying nightmares from myth and legend, and each encounter should be a new, exciting challenge for the characters, not just: "Ho hum, another eight-hit-dice hydra." The characters should never be allowed to be entirely sure about their opponents' capabilities.

How is a poor DM to do this, you ask, when the players have memorized the vital statistics of every monster in the *Monstrous Compendium*? The answer: Remember that monsters are more than lists of vital statistics. The descriptions given of them in the books are there for a reason; an orc is an orc is an orc, right? But consider this verbal description: "You see some humanoids, approximately six feet tall, wearing ring mail and carrying spears and shields. They are wearing helmets, so you can't quite make out their faces." Now suddenly the opponents could be orcs, hobgoblins, short gnolls, a character party, any lycanthrope in human form, preserved (or recently slain) zombies, doppelgangers, animated statues, or githy-anki. Of course, some extra description may be required in many cases (at close range, a death knight would be easy to distinguish from a hobgoblin), but not

always (a thief might not realize that the creature at whose back he just threw a dagger was not actually a death knight but was an allied cavalier). The DM must use his own judgment, but the idea is to always keep the characters on their toes. After a few attacks on giant snakes that turn out to be guardian nagas, the characters will be a bit more thoughtful before going into battle.

This idea can be expanded by not always strictly following the statistics for monsters given in the books. And while any alterations made by the DM should not be completely off the wall, they should keep characters guessing. For instance, to take a variation on an example from an old DRAGON® Magazine article, consider a goblin with 18/76 strength—not an extremely big change, but the characters may have pause when the creature does up to 10 hp damage with its short sword. When the goblin's sword breaks, and it grabs Arthur's heavy lance and hurls it at Galahad, the characters will be more wary of those puny creatures they once thought were such pushovers. This doesn't have to be done very frequently (in fact, once often suffices) to make the players far more wary about what their PCs attack—which is as it should be. A fighter who

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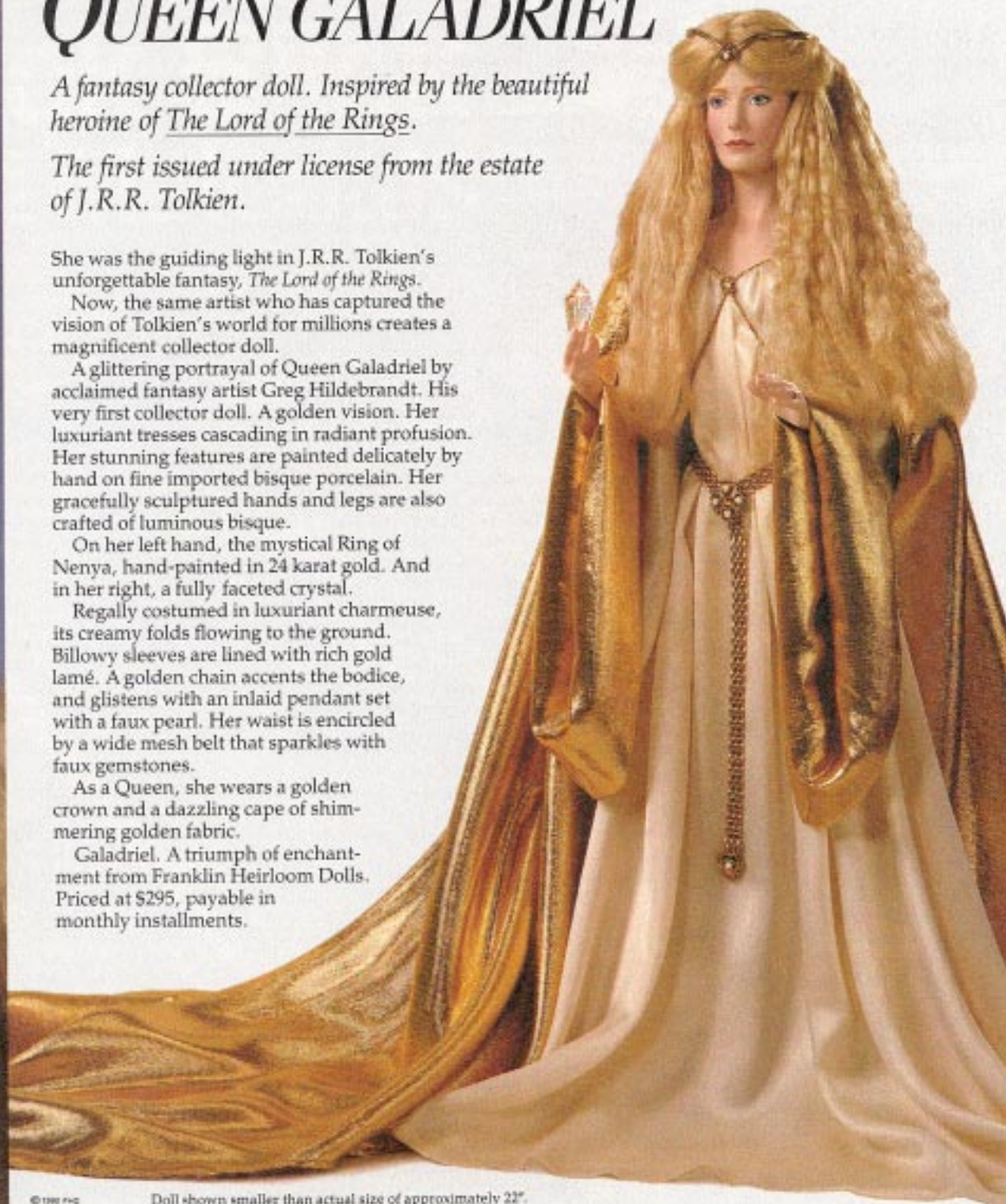
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attacks everything he sees is a very short-lived fighter.

Given monsters that the characters have previously encountered, it is probable that the PCs will know what they face (any 2nd-level idiot can recognize a kobold). On the other hand, if the monster is actually some rare, exotic creature that simply looks like something the characters recognize, then the DM is justified in describing it as such. In the case of the humanoids mentioned previously, the characters would probably assume that the armored humanoids were really orcs, until the foes turned into wolves, threw a *fireball*, or did something similar. Humans make observations based on past experiences. If there's no reasonable clue that a monster is different, then the characters will logically believe their opponents are orcs. Then, when the first *fireball* hits the party, the DM can say, "Well, they *looked* like orcs."

As another example, a mage who has encountered a manticores in his travels will most likely believe a lammasu or androsphinx to be another of that species, not having any idea that there are entirely different monsters that look almost exactly the same. When the mage first sees the creature, describe it like this: "It's got the body of a winged lion and the face of a man. It looks like a manticore." The mage will have to be careful or else risk fighting a beast with whom he would prefer to negotiate. The existence and appearance of some monsters are common knowledge (there isn't much you can do with a unicorn), but even these often have lesser-known relatives that just add to the confusion (how many people, even adventurers, know how to tell a dragon from a wyvern?). Even the ranger who knows goblins inside and out (literally speaking) might not realize that nilbogs exist and look exactly like goblins, and so would have no idea why his sword was not working against this monster. (Nilbogs, from the FIEND FOLIO® tome, are some of my favorite creatures.)

Another way to add mystery is to remember that the PCs cannot see or hear everything; their senses are limited. A description of a monster a mile away should be very different than a description when it is within 20 yards; on the open plains, it would be practically impossible to tell a storm giant two miles away from a berserker at a third of that distance. Something may seem much larger or smaller when it is far away, and the PCs will notice fewer details. Characters advancing on a group of orcs from a half-mile away will not be able to tell that those orcs are all carrying bows, with which they will pelt the party with arrows while the characters close for melee. The characters need not be told *everything*.

Another way that limited senses comes into play is with numbers of the enemy. In a forest, it would be very hard to tell the exact number of orcs attacking you, even

if they are right in front of you. The best thing to do is to give the players an estimate (e.g., "You think there are about 15 of them."). If the players ask for a more exact number, say, "Are you going to stop fighting to take a head count?" The characters have to cope with not being entirely in control of the situation, not knowing whether there are more orcs than they can reasonably expect to handle. This adds realism to the game and gives players the uncertainty their characters would experience in wandering through the great unknown.

Magic

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines magic as: "extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural force." In a fantasy role-playing system like the AD&D game, magic is the mystical force that heroes, monsters, and gods draw on to perform feats unattainable in the modern world, and as such is better understood by those who live in fantasy worlds than by us—but it is not much understood. Why are there so few wizards in fantasy worlds? Magic is such a complex and variable force, taking on myriad aspects in the game universe, that it takes years or centuries of devoted study to even begin to understand it. Yet many DMs allow players to blithely identify and interpret magical signs as if the PCs were the most studied of mages.

One of the most common problems is with magical items. Most magical items do not glow or make funny noises without a command word being spoken first, so there is no way to tell if items are magical without a *detect magic* spell. However, even if the DM does not immediately list all items with magical dweomers, the characters may still infer what is and isn't magical from what the DM does or does not mention. If certain rings, brooches, bracelets, etc. are only mentioned by the DM when they are magical, it will be a sure tip-off to the players. Most fighters will wear nonmagical gauntlets, belts, cloaks, boots, and jewelry of almost any sort, and most items the characters find will be normal ones. But my players have frequently sold magical gems for their jewelry value, simply not realizing that little things like coins and gems can be magical, too. If you do not mention "normal items" in the loot when characters search defeated opponents, then do not mention any magical items that resemble normal items, either. If the characters take everything that "looks magical," they will take the wands and scrolls but will probably not take the dead wizard's *robe of eyes*. Conversely, it would be practically impossible to cart off all the "normal stuff" from every battle to have it checked for magic in town. PCs will soon learn the value of having a *detect magic* spell with them on the road.

Another common mistake made by

inexperienced DMs is to tell the players what a magical item is and what it does, whether or not the characters can be reasonably expected to know this. For instance, in the example at the beginning of the article, the DM told the characters that they had found a *wand of metal and mineral detection*. Most likely, none of them had ever seen one before; even if they had, all such wands by no means look identical. Some may have ancient carvings depicting the wands use, others may have magical command words inscribed on them, and still others may be entirely featureless. True, an *amulet of the planes* might be very easy to tell from a *phylactery of long years*, but it would most likely be indistinguishable (barring any descriptive carvings on its surface) from a *medallion of ESP*. This especially applies to potions, which can be of any color, consistency, taste, or odor. No guarantee exists that if your last transparent green potion was a potion of *extra-healing*, your next transparent green potion will be, too—or even that your next *extra-healing* potion will be transparent green.

This is not to say that the characters will be forever in the dark about the functioning of their magical items. There is the *identify* spell, expressly designed for that purpose. If the PCs wish to be safe, they can instead go to a mage's guild, where wizards have the facilities and the specialists to safely identify the party's magical treasure (for a stiff fee, of course). This method could also be used to determine the number of charges in a rod, staff, wand, or other charged item, information that should be withheld from the players until they have to resort to this or similar options. (If the mage's guild didn't have a monopoly on needed services, it wouldn't be much of a guild, would it?) Also, the PCs may meet high-level characters in their travels who may be able to perform research to find command words (though they might not know what function it will command), offer snippets of information from ancient tomes or legend lore, or simply refer the PCs to an acquaintance who may have more knowledge on the subject. In one of my campaigns, a cleric possesses a magic ring, given to him by his gypsy mother, that not even the most powerful mages have been able to identify. He has been referred from place to place, gradually gathering what little information they could give him, and after two game years he has still not found the answer. This kind of adventure not only makes the players feel rewarded when they finally do discover the item's properties, but it is also an easy way to set up new adventures. (Consider a magical wand, unidentifiable by any local mages, which bears a strange, magical mark identified as the signature of a hermit illusionist who lived on top of a distant mountain. . . .)

We come to the problem of players who have memorized the magical item lists.

Consider a player's comment that took place in a game run by a friend of mine: "Magic boots, huh? Well, let's see. There's dancing, speed, striding and springing, levitation. . . . Try jumping up and down."

How can this be changed? There are many ways. First and possibly best, the DM can make up magical items that the players have never encountered. A PC who jumps up and down to test his new magical books will be very surprised when he finds that his *boots of earthquakes* have just demolished his castle, where he was testing his magical loot. There are many game aids out that have lists of interesting new magical items; if you get these lists, don't let your players see them. Another method, one that is much easier than buying scads of new books or taking the time to make up new magical items, is to use a small variation on random magical-item determination: Roll once to find out what the item is (a ring, wand, potion, etc.), then roll again to determine the powers of the item. For instance, on Table III, on page 84 in *Unearthed Arcana*, the DM rolls 47, indicating miscellaneous magic, then rolls a 14, referring him to Table III.E.1. A roll of 69 on this table indicates that the magical item is a set of bracers (normally *bracers of defense*). Now the DM rolls for powers, getting a 36, which indicates rings, and another 69, indicating Table III.C.2. A roll on this table results in 00, a *ring of truth*. Thus, the character has a completely new item: *bracers of truth*. This method takes slightly longer than simply rolling once on the tables, but it provides a vastly larger array of items that the characters might otherwise encounter.

Another problem, and one that has always been sort of a pet peeve of mine, concerns magical-weapon "pluses." This seems to go against the fantasy feeling that game designers have worked so hard to build up. Consider Malakon the Mighty, arrayed in his *plate mail of etherealness*, resplendent in his *girdle of storm giant strength*, and wielding his mighty long sword +4. Armor, swords, and other weapons are magically enchanted, and are no more numbers than a *wand of fireballs* is a simple "6-36 wand." The magic and mystery of enchanted weapons seems to be lost somewhere in the number shuffle. When I first tried to remedy this in my campaigns, I introduced a sword +2 to my players as "a beautifully wrought long sword, enchanted so as to magically guide the wielder's hand." The players looked astounded and proceeded to vie for the chance to possess this amazing artifact. I no longer tell the characters what the to-hit bonuses of their (few) magical weapons are; if they consult a mage to identify an item, he can deduce some small idea of the relative powers of two magical swords, but the characters have no absolute scale for judgments. It is an easy thing to keep a small note pinned to the inside of the DM's

screen, noting the magical bonuses of each character's weapons. To me, it adds spice to an otherwise boring topic.

A final aspect of magic that I feel the characters often know too much about is magical spells. How many times have you heard a DM say something like, "The wizard looks angry after that last remark. He starts casting a *cone of cold*. You have five segments to act. What do you do?"

This seems very unreasonable. Mages must study for decades to be able to learn the complex motions involved in spell-casting, so how can fighters interpret those motions with no trouble? Instead of saying that the wizard is casting a *cone of cold*, the DM can say that he is casting a spell; if the PCs are close enough, they might see what material components (if any) the wizard is using. Of course, the players will want to look at the AD&D *Player's Handbook* to evaluate the spell—but don't automatically let them! If a wizard PC has enough levels to cast the spell, his player can check the *Player's Handbook*; otherwise, tell him he has never encountered that spell. If the spell is fairly standard, such as *magic missile*, any but the most inexperienced wizards would be able to identify it immediately. But classes having no experience with spells should not be allowed to know what spell is being cast or how long they have in which to act; they must stay on their toes and be ready for anything, as anyone would have to do in the world of adventuring.

Money

Player characters can accumulate vast amounts of gold and gems in almost no time. The abundance of monetary treasure in the world is exceeded only by the characters' greed to obtain more. And when characters gain hundreds and thousands of pieces of gold, they have everything under control. Why should they not? They know how much everything costs, from the smallest dagger to *Baba Yaga's hut*. In our world, prices are never constant; in a world with so much less communication and trade than ours, think about how much prices would vary from place to place and from time to time, even for something as simple as an arrow.

One way to remedy this is to roll for prices whenever anyone buys anything. I suggest rolling 1d100, with 01-35 indicating underpriced by 5-50% (5 x 1d10) of the normal cost, and 51-00 indicating overpriced by 10-200% (5 x 2d20). These adjustments can be used not only for normal items but for magical items, sage expenses, training, and whatever else the characters have to pay for in town. This adds realism as it sometimes makes it necessary for characters to shop around for bargains.

An even better way to do this is to assign price ratios for certain items in specific places. For example, consider a city involved in a war; prices in general will be

high, metal weapons can be bought or sold for possibly double or triple their normal costs, and magical weapons might go for up to 10 times their listed value! Training would be hard to come by but might be financed by the city if the characters agree to stay and serve a term in the city's garrison; food and housing might fall in price because of the inns competing for all the new business from soldiers and from people displaced by the war, or skyrocket due to a shortage of supplies and money.

As another example, villagers from a town located in a barren mountain chain might buy wooden objects for three or four times their normal worth, but metal objects and weapons might be of little value due to the proximity of dwarven mines and traders. The local wizard might be a cranky old man who would charge many times the normal price to waste his time training Allan, the Annoying Aspiring Apprentice, or he might be a seeker of knowledge who will not ask for money but might ask the PCs to find some snippet of information or perform some task for him in return for the training. (This is a wonderful way to get characters into an adventure.) In all cases, remember that money is not the only thing that makes the world go round, but most NPCs will take the characters for as much as they think they can get. There are very few kind, generous, wealthy merchants who remain wealthy for very long.

In the same vein, gems may have varying prices depending on the area in which they are sold or appraised. The chart on page 26 of the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG* (or Table 86, page 134, of the AD&D 2nd Edition *DMG*) helps account for varying gem markets, but feel free to amend this chart based on individual circumstances. Also remember that few characters, with the exception of thieves, will have any practical experience in appraising gem values. They might discover that the huge gems they thought would be worth fortunes are flawed and worth only a few gold each. Huge, flawless gems are extremely rare, and most novices to the field cannot tell a diamond from a glass fake.

The exchange rates of gold and other precious metals are not always the same, either, and a DM can make a platinum piece equivalent to six or seven gold pieces (or even one or two), based on the relative abundance or scarcity of the metals in that region. Ancient Egyptian artificers made hundreds of works in gold; silver, which was scarce in the Nile valley, was considered far more valuable than gold. Maybe there are fantasy towns in which the characters' gold will be worthless, but any copper they have on them will be worth an equivalent number of platinum pieces! There are endless variations on this theme, enough to keep the campaign challenging even to the richest characters.

Continued on page 28

Another problem the characters may encounter is that of hauling all their loot around; carrying thousands of gold pieces is hard work! The characters may get it into their heads to change their gold into platinum or even into gems of equal value in order to accumulate even greater masses of treasure. For this, the characters will have to go to the moneychanger. But do you think any businessman would be involved in a venture that doesn't stand to turn a profit? Most moneychangers will charge a stiff fee to change the characters' cash, typical from 1-10% of the amount changed. If the characters think it is ludicrous that they should have to pay for simple moneychanging, they can go through the thieves' guild or less established intermediaries, but they'd better look out for *fool's platinum* (a variation on the second-level mage's *fool's gold* spell) and glass gems. They'll be in big trouble if they try to pay for anything with this bogus money! You get what you pay for, but you never get something for nothing.

Which brings up one more topic relevant to the characters' money (or impending lack thereof) — the thieves' guild. It's not called that for nothing, you know. Apprentices and journeyman thieves spend their time in town loaded down with so much stolen gold that they're practically trailing it behind them. Characters will probably be lucky if they even get to their hotel rooms without a good portion of their loot falling to the seamier side of society. In my campaigns, thieves know a "secret signal" to warn other thieves away from their party when they get into town, but any party traveling without an "escort" is fair game for the guild (and any party can be hit by free-lance and probably more experienced thieves). Of course, thieves are even more rewarded when they pick the pockets of those characters who have just had their money changed to a more transportable form.

Miscellaneous

A few more topics under the theme of mystery in the campaign do not fit nicely into any of the other three categories. One of these is the concept of "levels." How many times have PCs asked NPCs, "What level are you?" Levels are a means for the DM to gauge the relative strengths of characters to monsters, and for players to ascertain the extent of their own characters' abilities—not those of other characters or NPCs. In the actual game universe, there should be no real concept of character levels any more than there should be a concept of monsters' hit dice; a monster may be "really tough" according to rumors from adventurers who have encountered the critter, but this may be because it has a high armor class ("Our swords just couldn't get through its hide!"), high dexterity ("It moved so fast, we just couldn't hit it!"), some magical defense ("Our swords just passed right through the beast!"), or a lot of hit points ("We kept hitting it and hitting it, but the sucker just wouldn't lie down and die!"). Similarly, an NPC can surprise us, just as even our closed friends do sometimes. NPC henchmen, hirelings, or traveling companions in all likelihood have abilities that the character would not guess at, or conversely lack an ability that the character felt sure the NPC must have. NPCs are people, not lists of statistics, and it is important that the characters learn a little about the NPCs at a time, just as they would a new friend in real life. Level titles are a questionable case, although they can add spice to the AD&D 1st Edition game, as in the case of the cleric who finally gains the status of "High Priest" in his church, or the mage who finally attains the title of "Wizard" and all the benefits thereof. I let the PCs call themselves by level titles and will usually remark when an NPC has reached name level (e.g., a Wizard instead of just a magic-user, a Master instead of just a monk; but a fighter is only a Lord when he owns land, a thief only a Guildmaster when is the head of a guild). I am not usually more specific about NPC levels. If a

player has the audacity to actually ask an NPC, "What level are you?" he receives the response, "What are you talking about?"

Perhaps the most important point I can make pertains not to any individual problem, but to the way a DM should speak in general: the problem of semantics. A DM may try to institute some of the ideas outlined in this article, but often his own words reveal what he is trying to keep secret. The DM should never be too specific. When the players ask if the chasm is short enough for the PCs to jump across, say, "I think so." When players ask if the monster the PCs have just fought for an hour is really dead, instead of saying "Yes," say, "It looks like it." In the real world, we are never completely sure about anything; we have to rely on our judgment. One of my favorite replies to questions is along the line of "You don't know." ("Can I pick the lock?" "You won't know until you try.")

These are the kinds of responses that the DM should get in the habit of using, to reflect the characters' uncertainty about even their own capabilities. As mentioned on page 19 of the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG*, PC thieves should not be certain of their success. If one asks, "Am I hidden in shadows?" the response should be to the effect of, "You're trying." Finding and removing traps is another problem. Too many times, when the player asks, "Are there any traps?" the DM responds "No." Whether the player missed his roll or there were simply no traps present, the DM should say "You didn't find any." This is much more indicative of the character's state of mind after checking; it is his opinion that there aren't any traps, but some might have escaped his notice.


Putting it to use

The ideas presented in this article are little things at most, but they add spice and excitement to a campaign. It is often difficult to get started using these ideas, as they go against the grain of telling the players everything you know, but once you develop the habits, they seem to come naturally. Not letting players know more than they should soon becomes second nature. My players are fond of citing a time during a campaign when I was asked, "Did it feel like a spell was cast?" and I responded, "Possibly a little bit, but not really." It is little things like this that keep the players on their toes, which is as it should be when they go adventuring in the dangerous but exciting world of AD&D games.

Let's take a look at the encounter at the beginning of this article, revised to take into account the principles herein:

Player 1: "Whew! That was a tough battle! I thought those lizard men had us for a second!"

Player 2: "Yeah, I can't believe how well they fought! It was a good thing I had my enchanted sword, Narsil. It clove through their slimy green scales like butter!"




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Player 3: "You mean it's a good thing Gondam here grabbed that potion! [To Gondam.] I never knew you could pick pockets!"

DM [playing the part of Gondam]: "Well, I moonlighted as a thief a while back to supply money for my weapons and armor. I guess the subject just never came up."

Player 3: "Well, good job anyway. How did you know that potion would speed up your reflexes?"

DM [as Gondam, sheepishly]: "Well, I didn't, actually. It looked like a *potion of healing*, so I drank it."

Player 3: "You did what?! Talk about an ungrateful—"

Player 1: "Okay, guys, let's not fight about it. We all did what had to be done. Now [rubbing his hands together], what did the lizard men have on them? [All players turn to look at the DM.] Did they have any pouches?"

DM [shuffling papers and rolling a few dice]: "Only one of them is even wearing a belt, but there is a pouch on it. Inside are five gems—rather small, but they seem to be of good quality. Gondam looks at them for a moment, and says you might be able to get thirty or so gold pieces for each of them in town. In the same pouch are three vials, each about the size of a standard oil vial. All three liquids are transparent,

though one is bright red and the other two are colorless. These items are mixed up with some electrum pieces, probably close to 100. What looks like a wand is also thrust through one creature's belt."

Player 1: "Did they have any other stuff on them?"

DM: "They wore only loincloths and gaudy bracelets. The bracelets are inset with lewd and baroque designs depicting what appears to be a woman with clawed hands and the head of a squid performing various disgusting acts. The lizard men wore no boots or any other clothing or ornamentation."

Player 1: "Gondam, are the bracelets worth anything?"

DM [as Gondam]: "No, not really. The gold plating is fake, and the gems are glass. Pretty poor imitations, too. Wouldn't get a gold for any of them." [One set could be bracers of defense, but the players might never know.]

Player 1: "Well, okay. Leave them behind. We'll need all the carrying space we can get. The lizard men all had spears? Any other weapons?"

DM: They did have spears, although one broke, if you remember. All three spears are of good quality but don't seem to be exceptional in any way. The lizard man that had a pouch also had a dagger thrust

into his belt. The dagger's of lousy quality; it's rusted."

Player 1: "Okay, we'll take the spears for now. I'll strap them to my back."

Player 2 [arguing with Player 3]: "I tell you, those things weren't lizard men! They fought too well! And what about those bracelets? Isn't there a race that has a godlike lobster lady? They're called kuan-ton or something like that, I think."

Player 1: "Yeah, and her name is Bli-drool-poop or something. They're called. . . yuan-ti, yeah, that's it! [to the DM] Is that what they're called?"

DM [shrugging]: "Sounds okay to me."

Player 1: "Okay, they must inhabit the cliffs we saw down the coast. We can backtrack to town, hire some men, get that wand identified, then take on those yuan-ti."

Player 2: "I'll check the libraries. Aren't yuan-ti immune to fire or something?"

I guarantee you a much more interesting game. Enjoy!

Other helpful articles on maintaining mystery in fantasy RPGs include: "'Keep 'Em Guessing,'" by Ed Greenwood, in the Best of DRAGON® Magazine anthology vol. V; and "Also Known As... the Orc," by Ethan Ham, in DRAGON issue #158. Ω

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The Classics Campaign

Artwork by Thomas Baxa



Old AD&D® modules needn't die young!

by Marc Newman

Recently I discovered all of my old AD&D® modules, which had been sitting in a box since they were first used and exhausted of possibilities. All the early TSR modules were there, like the famous Against the Giants series and A2 *Secret of the Slavers Stockade*. I spent a while happily looking them over and reminiscing about what it was like to play AD&D games in the early 1980s when I purchased these modules. In particular, Gary Gyax's *Tomb of Horrors* caught my eye.

I was amazed at how much of the lich's tomb I still remembered after all these years. Most of these "classics" left me with lasting memories, but the memories from this one were particularly vivid. Suddenly I had an uncontrollable urge to run this scenario again and see how my new players would fare against the tricks and traps of the tomb. When I first ran it, my PCs had a special magical item that let them avoid most of the carnage, so I was eager to see if a different group would do so well. Besides, I was in the eighth grade the first time, and now I felt I could give the module the rich presentation that I wasn't able to give them. I made some phone calls to prospective players, and soon even the skeptics shared my enthusiasm.

Most of these old modules were created for tournaments. *Tomb of Horrors* was designed for GAMA's ORIGINS™ I, so it provided sketchy characters that add to its suitability for noncampaign gaming. We planned to use it as a one-shot since we were not in the middle of a AD&D campaign at the moment. This module is also very tough! I remember that when I originally ran it, my players ganged up on me when things got ugly.

We played *Tomb of Horrors* in one all-night session, and it worked out successfully. The party played well and fully utilized the power of certain spells in surprising ways. (Who would have imagined that a levitated coffin becomes a practically frictionless missile?) The PCs took a minimal amount of damage until the final confrontation.

Since dusting off the module turned out to be such a success, I got the idea of having a "classic" campaign made up of one or more of these old scenarios. I'm sure this idea has occurred to many, but here are my thoughts on what to expect

and to change.

First of all, the modules must be brought up to date with the rules you are using. All of the old modules were written before *Unearthed Arcana* was published, so rules like weapon specialization and nonweapon proficiencies will have to be added to AD&D 1st Edition campaigns. All NPC fighters in the scenarios should be specialized, and monsters should be toughened to make up for the specialized fighters in your adventuring group. Spells will have to be examined, too. Gary Gyax and other early module writers were fond of traps and magical protections against which certain spells were useless. As the DM, you will have to look at all the new spells available to player characters and see if the use of any of them should be circumscribed. The spell lists of NPC wizards should also be updated to reflect their new options; what is good for the PCs should also benefit their foes.

Luckily for the DM, making all the changes is not as much work as it seems. Much of it can be handled with common sense as the appropriate parts of the scenario are reached. For instance, if a magical wall stops *lightning bolts*, it is probably impervious to *chain lightning*, too. If all PC mages are in the habit of wearing armor or *stoneskin* spells, then the NPC mages should also have them.

The old modules were also written without later character classes in mind. Imagine a barbarian unleashed in the halls of the fire giants, or a thief-acrobat nimbly dodging traps in the *Tomb of Horrors*. Again, the DM may want to spice up the classics by making NPC fighters into barbarians. Similarly, new monsters can be changed or added. Maybe a crypt thing from the FIEND FOLIO® tome lurks in the *Tomb of Horrors*.

Illusionists should probably be totally revamped to take into account their expanded spell powers. The role of clerics has also changed. For instance, the *death's door* spell greatly changed the way PCs and NPCs alike are healed, letting them avoid most of the nasty effects of reaching negative hit points. Balance these new powers carefully.

In an AD&D 2nd Edition campaign, more will have to be altered. Morale levels and THAC0s for NPCs and monsters

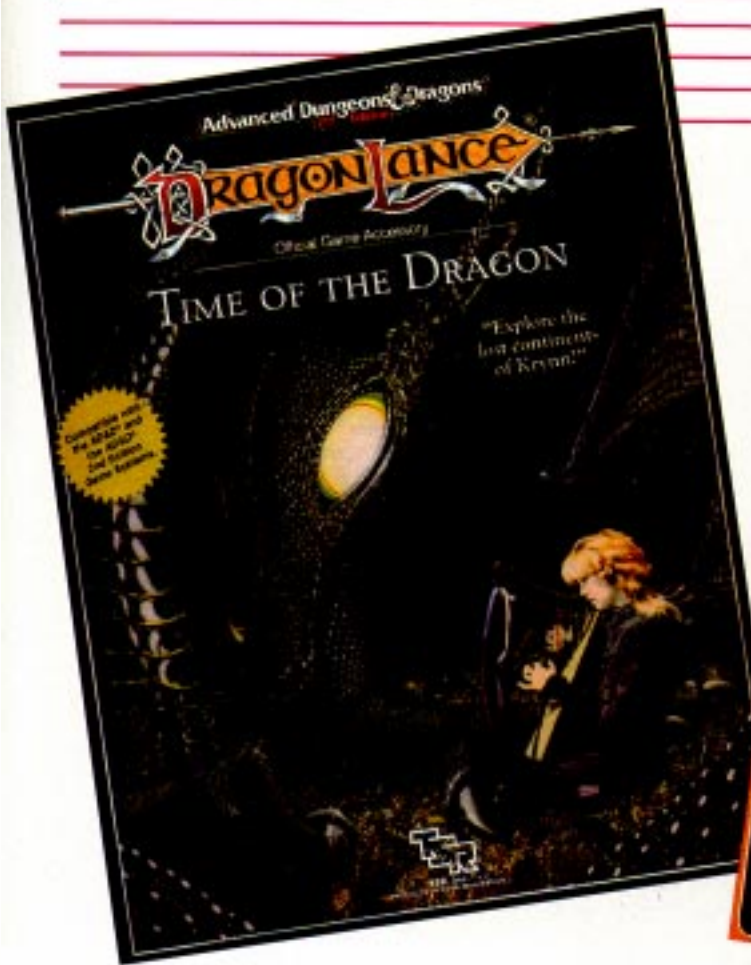
should be added, and you should seriously consider beefing up the power of PCs who hope to venture into the Against the Giants series if you use the giants from the *Monstrous Compendium*. Character class changes will also take time to make, and the four *Complete Handbooks* on the classes offer lots of kit options for upgrading NPCs of every sort.

Finally, decide if the "classics" campaign is going to be a series of one-shots or an integrated quest. A one-shot will provide entertainment for a session or two, but a campaign must be planned out. Keeping the same PCs from module to module adds to the depth in the campaign. If you use the tournament characters provided, I recommend that they be fleshed out with broader equipment lists and with histories and personalities like those provided with the characters in RPGA™ tournaments published in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine. Furthermore, the scenarios should be linked in a consistent manner, much as the giant-drow-Abyss series was finally collected in GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Demonweb Pits*, or the Slave Lords modules in A1-4 *Scourge of the Slave Lords*.

These early modules were written in a more primitive era of gaming, when the atmosphere was a little more wondrous and gamers were less jaded. The times were simpler but had a certain charm and energy. It was a fertile period where the early writers were building a foundation for AD&D game design that the next generations have refined. An occasional return to the "basics" lets us see where we've been while having a lot of fun re-playing these adventures.

These-classics also had many excellent ideas that were among the first of their kinds. S3 *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* has a mixed-genre setting that is brilliant. The Against the Giants series went beyond fortress bashing. And the D series was more than just the first underground adventure, it was also the best.

You, too, may find it rewarding to dig these old modules out of your closet and modify them for play. Along with rediscovering a great adventure, you can get more than your money's worth from a forgotten purchase and make a nostalgic visit to the origins of the AD&D game.



Role-playing reviews

Worlds beyond our own

©1990 by Jim Bambra

Fantasy gaming worlds are now available in abundance and cover a wide variety of cultures and settings. Some recreate historical periods of Earth history, some reproduce the fictional worlds of successful authors, and some draw their inspiration from a diverse number of sources. Game systems like Chaosium's *PEN-DRAGON** game and I.C.E.'s *MIDDLE-EARTH ROLE PLAYING** game are designed to fit into their own chosen gaming worlds, with world and game limiting and defining one another.

Other game systems are more generic. TSR's *D&D*® game existed happily for years with only the vaguest of campaign settings. Similarly, the *AD&D*® game didn't gain its first official world until 1983, with the publication of the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK*® setting. Since then, both the *D&D* and *AD&D* games have shown that they are readily adaptable to a wide array of settings. The *D&D* game's official Known World currently boasts no less than 18 different cultures and settings all neatly described in the series of *Gazetteer*

and *Creature Crucible* supplements. While ostensibly part of the same gaming world, these supplements have greatly expanded the background of the *D&D* game and allow for a wide variety of game styles. TSR, Inc. is now about to literally open up the Known World with the introduction of the *Hollow World* boxed set and a series of adventures that take PCs on a journey into the center of their world.

The *AD&D* game has an equally impressive array of campaign backgrounds all to choose from. The *WORLD OF*

GREYHAWK, DRAGONLANCE® saga, FORGOTTEN REALMS™, Fritz Leiber's LANKHMAR™, and the SPELLJAMMER™ settings have now been joined by the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set that lays the foundations for fantasy horror. Within these game worlds, DMs and players can either specialize by staying within one of the many cultures described or can participate in world-spanning campaigns.

Clearly, players of the D&D and AD&D games are not short of options when it comes to choosing a campaign setting. But players of other games also have a lot to choose from. Steve Jackson Games' GURPS* game now has GURPS Conan, GURPS Witch World, and GURPS Fantasy to support its fantasy elements. I.C.E. has released the SHADOW WORLD* setting, catering to players of the ROLEMASTER* and FANTASY HERO* games, and MERP* supplements continue to appear on a regular basis. Lion Rampant is producing supplements to expand the magical world of its ARS MAGICA game. Games Workshop is supporting its WARHAMMER* world. Chaosium has published the second edition of the STORMBRINGER* game in the world of Michael Moorcock's Elric stories. Columbia Games continues to expand the world of HARN*, and Bard Games continues to detail its world of TALISLANTA*.

With so many settings available, gamers are spoiled for choices. Approaches to campaign design vary from meticulous attention to detail to sweeping panoramic overviews of the worlds described. This month, this column looks at some of these worlds. We kick off with Glorantha, one of the finest game worlds ever conceived, followed by *Time of the Dragon*, a very impressive addition to TSR, Inc.'s popular DRAGONLANCE saga world.

GLORANTHA *: Genertela, Crucible of the Hero Wars

RUNEQUEST* game supplement
The Avalon Hill Game Company \$24
Boxed set with a 40-page booklet, a 100-page booklet, a 36-page booklet, and a large two-color map

Design: Greg Stafford, Sandy Petersen, and William Dunn

Editing: William Dunn and Sandy Petersen
Cover illustration: Steve Purcell

Interior illustrations: James Kevin Ramos and Steve Swenston

Cartography: Charlie Krank and William Dunn

I'm a relative newcomer to the RUNEQUEST game, having paid little attention to the game or its supplements until The Avalon Hill Game Company published the third edition, under license from Chaosium, in 1984. Even though I had heard many good reports about the RUNEQUEST game, in those days I was too bound up in AD&D and GDW's TRAVELER* campaigns to pay it any attention. Consequently, I'm unfamiliar with many

classic RUNEQUEST game supplements.

When I did look at the RUNEQUEST game, it struck me as detailed and very workable, but a little too complex for my tastes. The alternate-Earth setting presented in the third edition was interesting but too underdeveloped to really fire my enthusiasm. The Introduction to Glorantha Book in the third edition set was more like it. It presents an overview of the world of Glorantha, detailing its history, deities, and creatures clearly and concisely, but it left much about the world unanswered. Players of previous editions of the RUNEQUEST game lamented the lack of emphasis placed on Glorantha in the third edition, but I failed to see what they were getting at since I knew so little about it.

With the publication of *Gods of Glorantha* (reviewed in DRAGON issue #127), my interest in the RUNEQUEST game and in Glorantha in particular was fired. Now, with the GLORANTHA boxed set available, I can see why veteran RUNEQUEST game fans were so excited. Glorantha is beyond a shadow of a doubt one of the greatest game worlds ever to see print.

Glorantha was first conceived by Greg Stafford in 1966, before the age of role-playing, as a fictional setting for his stories. Over the years, Greg added to the background of the world, drawing on his wide knowledge of Earth's myths and legends. With the assistance of Chaosium's writers and editors, Greg succeeded in creating a world rich in history and myth. With my new knowledge of Glorantha, I clearly saw how much the RUNEQUEST game's development owed to Glorantha. The two have an almost symbiotic relationship. Greater vibrancy was added to the emphasis that the RUNEQUEST game places on the role of spirits, gods, and religions in determining the abilities of player characters and in defining the PCs' cultural outlooks and personalities. Within Glorantha, the gods and their followers are the prime movers and shakers. Transposed to an alternate Earth setting, with its more human-orientated history, a lot of flavor was lost. But enough of singing the virtues of Glorantha over the alternate Earth setting. Let's get down to what makes Glorantha really great.

The GLORANTHA boxed set focuses mainly on the continent of Genertela, where the Hero Wars are destined to begin. The southern continent of Pamaltela and the large islands of the world are to be covered in future supplements. The boxed set has three booklets:

Glorantha Book, Book 1: Here we are treated to the mythic history of Glorantha, its various planes of existence, and its physical form. An informative essay describes daily life, levels of civilizations, and the roles of adventurers within Gloranthan society. The book rounds off with a look at Gloranthan calendars and languages.

The history of Glorantha is first class. It starts with the mythical origins of the

world and discusses how it became populated by generations of gods who ended up warring amongst themselves. Briefly and simplistically, the Storm God Orlanth killed the Sun God Yelm and plunged Glorantha into the Dark Age, a time when Chaos entered the world to destroy it. Facing defeat on a cosmic scale, the gods, under the influence of Arachne Solara, joined together in the Great Compromise to save the world. Yelm again rose into the sky, and Time began. The gods withdrew to the God Plane, and priests became important as intermediaries between people and the gods. Various cultures have differing interpretations of this story, reflecting their own origins, histories, and beliefs. This divergency adds greatly to the mythic content of Glorantha, making it fascinating and very credible.

Since the beginning of Time, 1621 years have passed. Empires have come and gone. Strange events have shaken the world. Gods have been created and destroyed by mortals. The seas have been closed and opened only recently to those who know the correct ritual. The Hero Wars, a magical conflict of epic proportions, are about to commence.

Genertela Book, Book 2: This 100-page book provides the bulk of the information on each of the major geographical areas of the continent of Genertela. Entries are necessarily short but adequately describe each region's inhabitants, culture, government, common languages, military forces, and religions. The entries also include people of note and places of interest. Prophecies foretelling the impending Hero Wars are liberally sprinkled throughout this book, along with capsule histories of those NPC heroes who are destined to play major roles. Encounter tables listing common, not so common, and rare events are provided for each area, and are intended as an aid to allow GMs to bring to life each of the areas described.

The variety of cultures and societies covered is very impressive, reflecting the years of careful thought and development that has gone into creating Glorantha. Here are Oriental cultures, feudal economies, nomadic herders, barbarian settlers, the sophisticated Lunar Empire, and primitive hunter-gatherer societies, to name only a few. Each has its own history and religious cults that are all neatly integrated into the world's development. The breadth of vision here is stunning and is a prime example of the world designer's art.

Genertelan Player's Book, Book 3: Make no mistake, Genertela is big. So big it could prove to be indigestible to all but the most dedicated GM. Faced with such an array of cultures and histories, it is difficult to know where to start a group of players and provide them with the background information that they need to characterize and play Gloranthan characters. Chaosium's designers have drawn on their long experience to make this as painless as possible. In fact, they have suc-

ceeded admirably.

Four cultures are recommended as being suitable for newcomers to Glorantha. These are the primitive Hsunchen hunters, the nomad warriors of Prax, the barbarians of the Orlanthe culture, and the medieval culture of western Genertela. The basics of each culture are told to the young player characters in the form of a question-and-answer dialogue with either their fathers or uncles. The questions (such as who are we, what makes us great, how do we live, what is important in life, who rules us, what is our relationship to others, and who are our gods) give useful insights into the featured cultures. These are further backed up by more detailed essays on the cultures that further define lifestyles, customs, and beliefs.

The above information, when used in conjunction with the "What the Priests Say" handouts from the *Gods of Glorantha* supplement, creates a believable world setting and a firm grounding for Gloranthan player characters to begin their adventuring careers. The only drawback is that only human characters are covered, but nonhuman races are described in the *Trollpak* and *Elder Secrets* supplements.

Information on cults worshiped, cultural levels, occupations, and magic are given in the Genertelan Player's Book for all major cultures of Genertela. GMs who wish their player characters to belong to one of these cultures can use the four given cultures as models, with relevant information being extrapolated from the Glorantha Book.

Evaluation: This boxed set is a very impressive product. To be used effectively, the *Gods of Glorantha* supplement is needed; without it, the deities of Glorantha remain little more than a collection of names, but with it Glorantha comes to life. The two supplements complement each other perfectly and allow latecomers like myself to fully appreciate the world of Glorantha.

Whether you play the RUNEQUEST game or another system, Glorantha is a world to study and marvel at for its complexity and detail. Players of the RUNEQUEST game have cause for celebration and more than a little smugness in knowing that the one of the greatest campaign worlds has been designed for them.

Time of the Dragon

AD&D® DRAGONLANCE® Supplement
Boxed set with a 48-page booklet, a 112-page booklet, 22 full-color reference cards, and four full-color map sheets
TSR, Inc. \$18

Design: David "Zeb" Cook

Editing: Mike Breault and Jon Pickens

Cover: Robin Wood

Illustrations: Stephen Fabian

Cartography: Dave Sutherland and David "Diesel" LaForce

The first DRAGONLANCE saga adventure was published in 1984. Since then, novels, adventures, and other supplements

on this setting have proliferated and proved to be very popular. The first four DRAGONLANCE saga adventures are soon to be rereleased in one volume for use with the AD&D 2nd Edition game. TSR, Inc., clearly has no desire to let the DRAGONLANCE saga die and is eager to expand the campaign's possibilities.

Yet the DRAGONLANCE saga has not met with universal approval by players of the AD&D game. Many found its plotlines narrow and constricting; they felt that their characters had little real choice over their actions. The "obscure death" rule, in which important characters could not die (they merely appeared to die, only to pop up again later), may have encouraged heroic role-playing, but many players felt that regardless of what their characters did, the PCs would succeed. The saga's plot seemed to be a great beast with a life of its own. Others have criticized the world of Krynn for having too many inconsistencies and for being too trite with its two-dimensional heroes and its clearly defined boundaries between good and evil. However, love it or hate it, the commercial success of the DRAGONLANCE saga cannot be denied. The DRAGONLANCE saga is here to stay, and it has been expanded dramatically.

Time of the Dragon is a boxed set for the world of Krynn, but it does not involve the continent of Ansalon, where the events of the War of the Lance unfolded. With the war over, *Time of the Dragon* introduces us to the continent of Taladas, which has its own unique cultures and geography. Playing no major role in the War of the Lance, Taladas has remained relatively untouched by its events. The peoples who inhabit this continent have markedly different views and lifestyles from those of Ansalon. The same gods exist, but they are known by different names and manifest themselves in different ways. The absence of the gods following the events of the Cataclysm has had its effect on the development of Taladas, but in a satisfying and intriguing way. Divorced from their deities, the clerics of Taladas compensated by finding new ways to maintain their influence. Now that the gods have returned, they have refrained from making clerical powers widely available. Only a chosen few clerics from each culture are able to work miracles.

The dragons of Taladas are also different in their outlook. When Takhisis, the Queen of Darkness, returned to Krynn, she released the evil dragons and kept them secretly within Taladas. She later called the evil dragons to join her, but some refused to go. When the good dragons searched the world for their stolen eggs, they journeyed to Taladas. Once released from their Oath, not all of the good dragons flew to Ansalon; like some of the evil dragons before them, some good dragons remained in Taladas. Consequently, the dragons of Taladas have attitudes unlike those of their cousins in Ansalon. They are

more neutral, and many of the good dragons are riddled with guilt. Red dragons are noted for their cowardice rather than their traditional desires to destroy.

Other races have diverged and developed differently from those on Ansalon. The need to survive has colored their outlooks, making the cultures of Taladas darker in mood than those of Ansalon. This makes the continent gritty in feel and adds to its appeal. To see how this has been achieved, take a look at *The Guide Book To Taladas*.

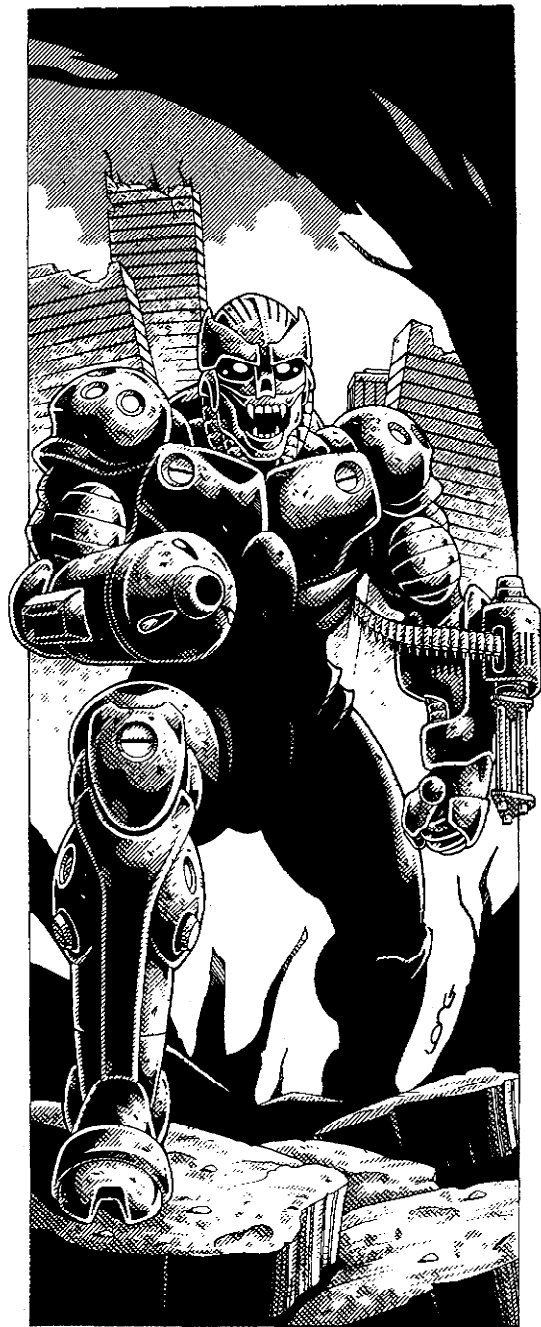
The Guide Book To Taladas: This book takes us across Taladas one area at a time. After a brief history of the continent, Taladas's geography and its impact on its peoples is discussed. The foremost event in Taladas's history was the Cataclysm, during which one particularly huge meteorite struck the continent. Volcanoes erupted, and earthquakes shattered the land. Volcanic dust fell over the continent, the seas were poisoned, and land masses shifted. In the center of Taladas now lies a vast sea of molten lava, surrounded by belching volcanoes. The races and cultures of Taladas adapted in many different ways to their new environment.

The rest of the Guide deals with the detailed geography of each area and with the peoples who live there. The emphasis is on exotic cultures, not on the feudal societies and economies that make up the bulk of fantasy game worlds. This is a refreshing and intriguing change.

The northwest part of Taladas contains the steppe-dwelling Uigan, who draw their inspiration from the Mongols and Huns of historic Earth. The elves of this area are similar to the Uigan, being nomadic horse warriors. On the other hand, the goblins follow a settled lifestyle, living in small villages and hunting for food. They ambush elven and human horsemen, and they make war with the elves.

The background on these cultures is nicely detailed, evoking lifestyles and belief systems that fit in well with the land around them. As mentioned earlier, the loss of clerical abilities following the Cataclysm is neatly integrated into the histories of the peoples. The effects of the selective return of these powers are also well described.

Other cultures and races are given a similarly detailed treatment. Of special interest are the Marak kender, the Minotaur League, the Fianawar (surface-dwelling dwarves), and the gnomoi (gnomes). The Marak kender have changed from the cute, cheerful ones of Ansalon into a race marked by suspicion and paranoia. Marak kender are just as likely to rifle your pockets, but they're doing it for their own protection, so that magical items cannot be later used against them. The Fianawar, having been driven from their underground homes by the Cataclysm, have developed a fear of the underground. The League of Minotaurs is the largest power in Taladas, and its soci-



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ety, while reflecting the belief that might makes right, also has built-in controls to regulate it. The gnomes of Taladas are split into two distinct groups: the minoi and the gnomoi. The minoi love to build devices but lack the logical minds necessary to make them work effectively. The gnomoi are far more practical and control gnomish society, taking steps to make sure that it stays stable and develops.

Overall, the continent of Taladas is an intriguing and impressive game world. Where it falls down slightly is in its presentation. The information is all presented from the point of view of the DM, with no sections specifically for players to read. The burden of introducing the players to Taladas and bringing the world to life falls squarely on the GM. Sections written specifically for players, such as occur in the Glorantha boxed set and in many of the D&D Gazetteers, would have enhanced this product immensely and made it more accessible.

The Rule Book To Taladas: This 48-page booklet contains game rules specific to Taladas. It makes new player character races available, including the bakali (a race of lizardmen), goblins, minotaurs, and ogres. It also discusses any changes required to make standard character classes fit smoothly into Taladas. Player-character kits that summarize the various abilities, skills, proficiencies and backgrounds for 34 common character classes and races are provided. These make character gen-

eration easier and provide backgrounds for PCs, but fail to give a detailed overview of cultural and racial outlooks.

Anyone interested in the military side of Taladas will find the army organization charts and statistics for the BATTLESYSTEM™ supplement invaluable. Even if the BATTLESYSTEM supplement is never used, the information presented here is also very useful in standard role-playing encounters.

A selection of monsters that inhabit Taladas round off the book. They fill useful niches and are integral to the background of Taladas.

Maps: *Time of the Dragon* contains some of the finest maps to ever appear in a role-playing product. The large two-part map of the continent of Taladas is excellent. The third map in the set is a blow-up of the lands of the League of Minotaurs, and the fourth map shows the minotaur-controlled city of Kristophan. Like the continental maps, these are nicely rendered, 'with good use of color.

Cards: The color cards are also impressive and have been used to good effect to show clothing and armor styles, gnomish devices and a gnome citadel, and areas of the city of Kristophan in more detail. The standard of the artwork on the cards is very high, with the armor and clothing cards being particularly noteworthy.

Evaluation: The background of *Time of the Dragon* is plausible and meticulously presented, with neatly integrated

cultures and races. It can easily be used as a campaign setting in its own right, as it not tightly tied to the world of Krynn.

Time of the Dragon is well worth looking at and marks a departure from the standard DRAGONLANCE saga setting. It has plenty to recommend it to gamers looking for a harsh and gritty fantasy world. Check it out; you won't be disappointed.

Short and sweet

A few items were dropped from this column in DRAGON issue #158 for lack of space. Let's take a quick look at some light-hearted approaches to horror role-playing.

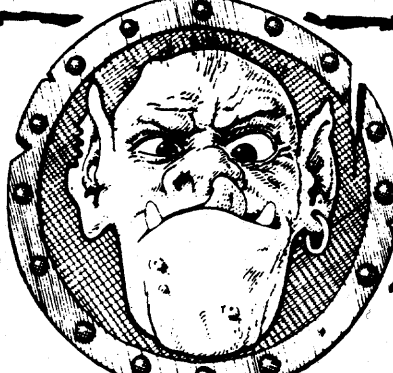
IT CAME FROM THE LATE, LATE, LATE SHOW* game, by Bradley K. McDevitt. Stellar Games, price not available. Lights, cameras, ACTION! This game lets you play second-rate actors in some of the worst movies ever produced. That's right, you can take the starring role in such turkeys as *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and *Plan Nine From Outer Space*. You get to do all those dumb things of which only movie actors are capable, like sticking your head round the door to see who's making the chopping noise with the axe instead of calling the police or running for your life. Cheap tongue-in-cheek fun, this game is well worth a look. This game is available from Stellar Games, P.O. Box 156, Swanton OH 43558, U.S.A.

GHOSTBUSTERS INTERNATIONAL* game, by Aaron Allston and Doug Kaufmann. West End Games, Inc., \$18. They're back! The Ghostbusters have returned not only in a movie but in the second edition of the GHOSTBUSTERS role-playing game as well. This new edition retains the flavor of the original game (see "Role-playing Reviews," DRAGON issue #132) but adds oodles of new game rules. Whether those rules are actually needed depends on your tastes. I thought the game worked fine as it was, but others decided that it needed a more tactical gaming feel. The new rules look like they'll work just fine, so if you've never experienced the thrill of getting "slimed" or blasting away with a proton pack, here's your chance.

Tobin's Spirit Guide, by Kim Mohan. West End Games, Inc., \$13. There are more spooks and spirits around than could possibly be crammed into the GHOSTBUSTERS INTERNATIONAL rules, so here's lots more of the pesky slimes for your Ghostbusters to trap. With an introduction by no less an expert than Dr. Raymond Stanz, it's got to be good.

GHOSTBUSTERS INTERNATIONAL products are available from West End Games, Inc., RD 3, Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431. Ω

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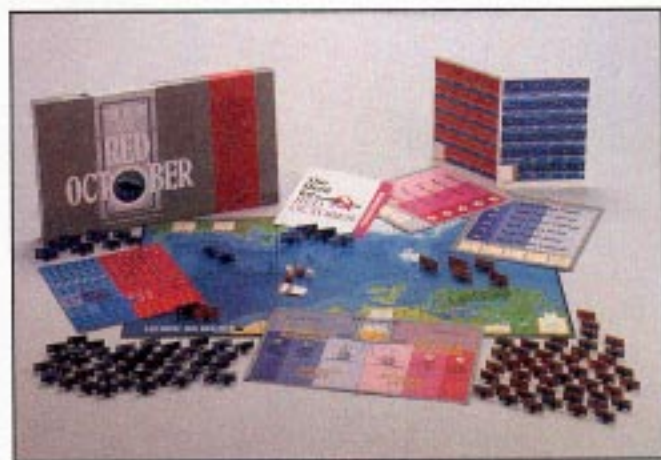
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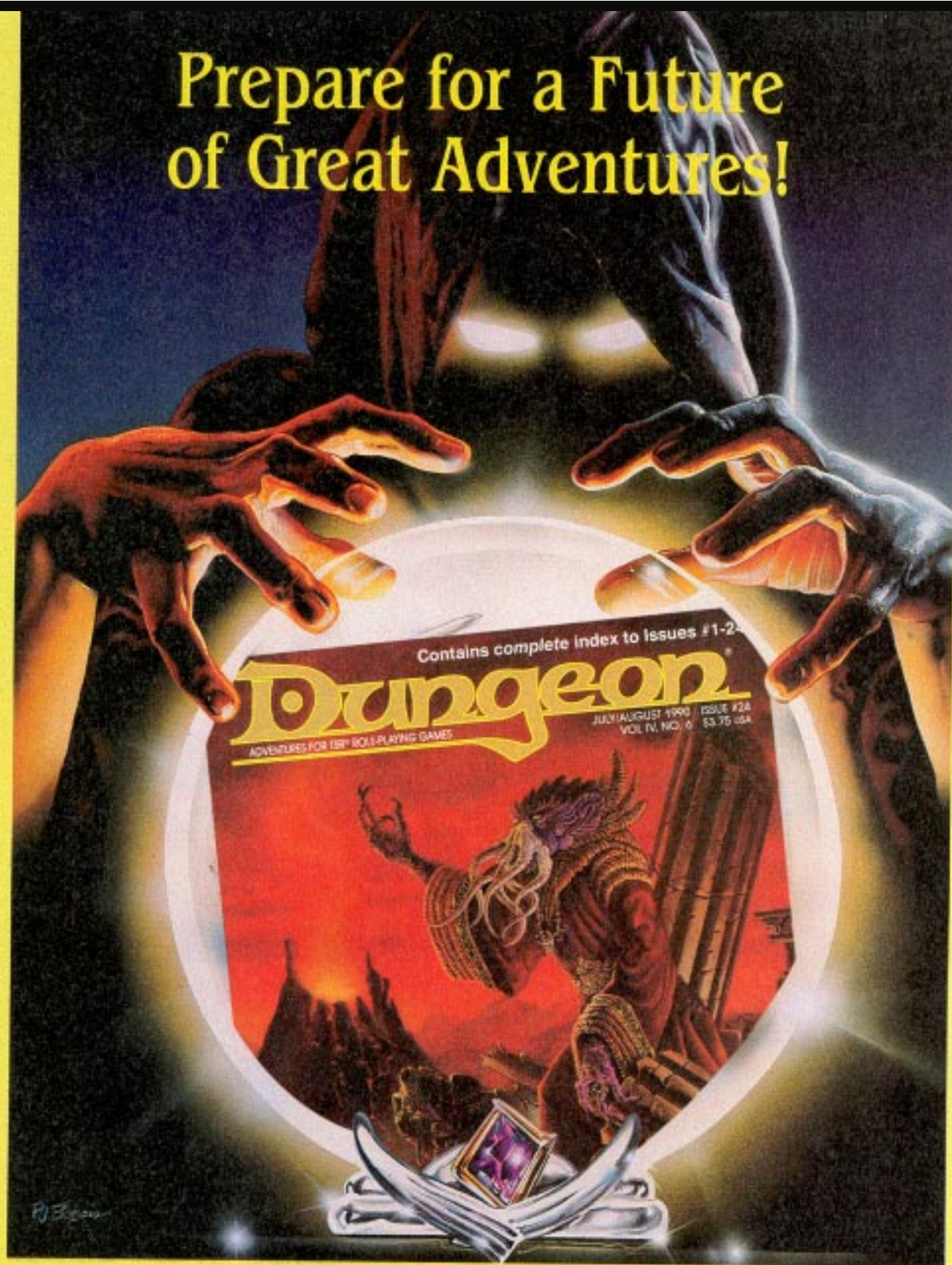
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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 8: Voyaging down under—
and inside!

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

from the Journals of
prince haldemar of haaken
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
princess ark
Imperial Explorer, etc. etc.

Eimir 16, 1965: It was merely a day after we left the moon Myoshima when the alarm was sounded. Five large ships were sailing through space on an intercept course with our *Princess*. They were very close, coming around a small field of asteroids that had shielded them from our view. There was no time for evasive maneuvers.

The ships were of a strange build, most of them bearing bird features. The largest of the five, a very large war galley, had an eagle figurehead, and its hull was engraved with golden feathers. Two large eagle claws juttied out on either side of the

galley's prow. The vessel bore the banner of a capital ship. Many pennants and main sails revealed a black lion against a white background. Clearly, we had run into the clutches of a Heldannic war fleet.

The boltmen raced to their battle stations and braced for combat, while the sailors feverishly prepared the riggings for an imminent boarding. Yet the rakasta Kenju and his two henchmen remained near the center of the deck, calmly observing the proceedings with haughty and arrogant postures. They showed no signs of fear or nervousness.

Oddly enough, I soon discovered there was little activity aboard the Heldannic "warbirds"; certainly no Heldannic sailors were preparing for battle. The ships came almost within ramming distance of us—and inexplicably continued full ahead, totally ignoring our potentially doomed *Princess Ark*. I could clearly observe Heldanners moving about their ships, mending sails and scrubbing decks; one of their leaders casually paced the upper deck, mumbling some obscure prayer while picking his nose. They were totally oblivious to our presence!

The ships came so close that I could hear an eerie military march emanating from the war galley. I dismissed that as an auditory illusion, and all was fine. The ships sailed on and soon disappeared behind us into the celestial void. Kenju and his henchmen simply returned to their cabins, apparently satisfied and no more surprised at the results than they would have been had they seen another group of asteroids pass by us. Somehow, they had been confident of this event's outcome.

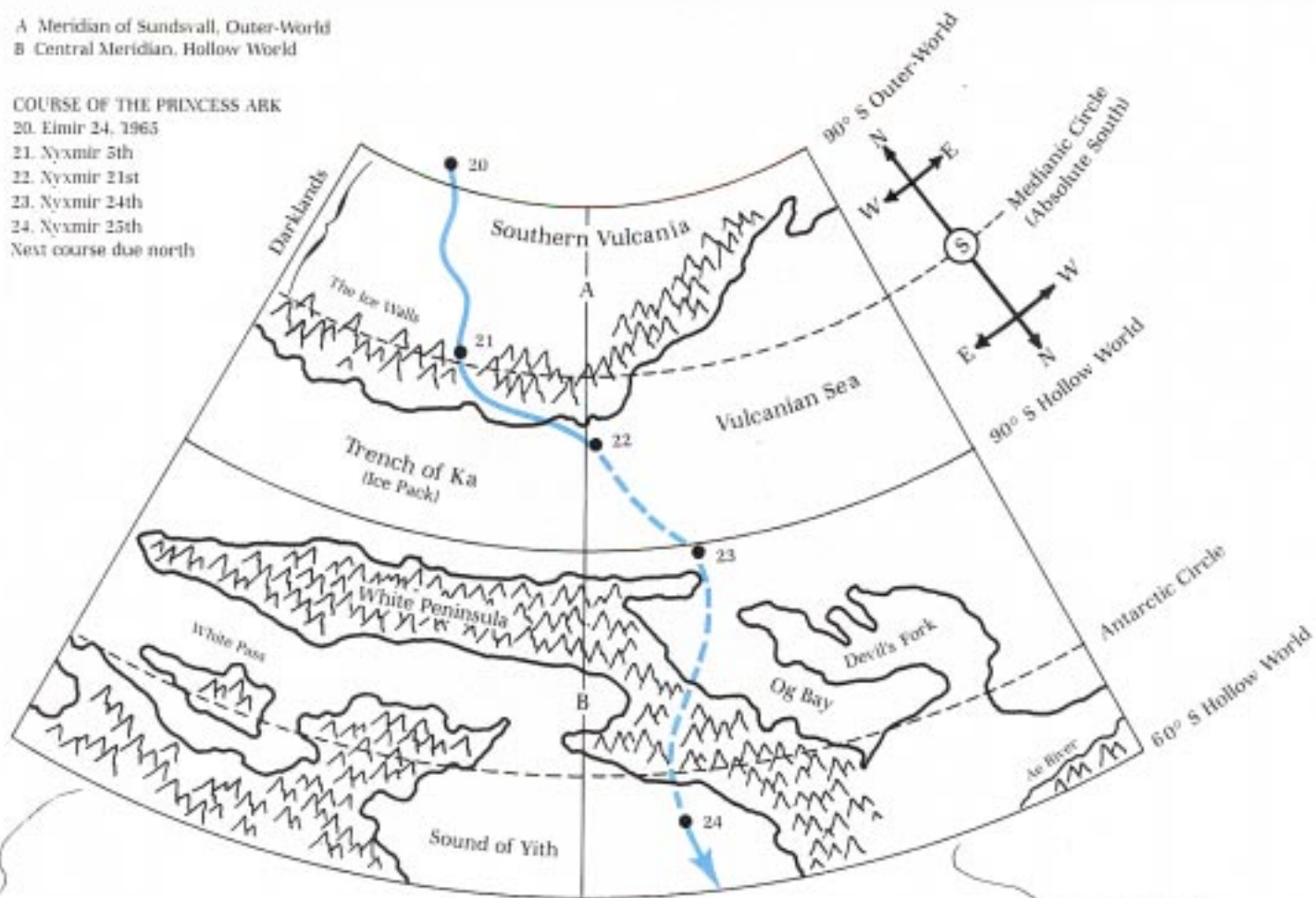
I had the chance to observe the Heldannic ships at my leisure as they unwittingly sailed by. The war galley was very heavily armed with catapults and ballistas. I could see metal bolts all along its hull, holding



A Meridian of Sundsvall, Outer-World
 B Central Meridian, Hollow World

COURSE OF THE PRINCESS ARK

20. Elmir 24, 1965
 21. Nyxmír 5th
 22. Nyxmír 21st
 23. Nyxmír 24th
 24. Nyxmír 25th
 Next course due north



Artwork by Jim Holloway



together an ominous coating of metal plates. This ship was not built to fly in the air, like the *Princess*; it would require far too much magic to be worthwhile. I suspect it was built in this airless void with the help of several smaller vessels. Large feathery oars slowly rowed the galley through space, occupying four decks of the ship. The strangest sight, however, were a half-dozen small black boats—for lack of a better term—tethered to poles at the sides and stern of the galley. These were each large enough for one man and had man-made wings and tails like those of ravens. Two rods, probably weapons packed with Heldannic clerical magic, jutted from beneath the wings.

Escorting the war galley were four smaller ships, each bearing some resemblance to a vulture. More lightly armed, these lesser ships seemed built more for speed and maneuverability than for heavy assault. From astern, all four ships displayed appropriate birdlike tails. It was a sight I'll not soon forget.

Eimir 17, 1965: Our three rakasta guests haven't come out of their cabins yet. So much the better. At least they haven't interfered with ship's duties.

I have begun studying Lord Katayama's monolith. After several hours of experimenting, I determined that the monolith has the ability to bend light around a sphere with a set radius—a sphere large enough to encompass the *Princess Ark*. These are the same properties of Myoshima's core. Smaller fragments of the monolith retain this light-bending power, with areas of effect appropriate to each fragment's size. This explains why the Heldannic fleet ignored the *Ark*, and also why the rakasta felt so obviously secure. The Heldanners simply could not see us! The *Princess Ark* is practically invisible! This Imperial gift has proven to be a very useful contraption indeed.

Eimir 18, 1965: I observed the stars and their alignment with our world as a means of measuring the speed of the *Princess*. Although it is hardly noticeable to the crew, our speed in the void has varied greatly. It seems that our speed has to do with the proximity of other physical bodies, such as ships on intercept courses, asteroids, moons, or planets. The farther we are from physical obstacles, the greater our speed potential becomes. This is vital for future voyages, since it would enable journeys into the void far from our world and at little risk of smashing into obstacles.

In effect, what seems to be "full speed ahead" on our *Princess* remains a stable constant when we are close to a moon, within our world's skyshield, or within sighting distance of an oncoming ship. Away from celestial bodies, our speed could increase a hundredfold—indeed, perhaps even more. I do not have the means to fathom any conceivable limits.

It appears that the constant use of a means of propulsion such as magical

power or very fine silk sails increases our speed, especially more so when traveling away from a world. Removing the means of propulsion would not be sufficient to halt the ship, which would instead continue on its course at a constant speed. Inertia remains a definite force in the void.

Eimir 22, 1965: I have finally located Herr Rolf, our fugitive Heldannic knight, several hundred miles ahead of our ship and riding a winged sabre-tooth tiger common to Myoshima. He has put his few hours of lead time to good use. I am now tracking the knight with my *crystal ball*. Straps have kept him on the saddle during the times he has fallen asleep. Herr Rolf is getting very close to our world's great blue skyshield, heading toward the south pole. The *Princess* is pursuing, following a southerly course slightly above the skyshield. It would be preferable to capture him while the *Princess* is still in the void, as that would save us the trouble of returning later to complete further studies of this outer space. I would intercept the man myself in normal conditions, but my inexperience in this environment demands that I remain aboard. We will maintain our course and pursue the fugitive.

Eimir 23, 1965: We are finally closing in on Herr Rolf. He is now in visual range of the common crew. It should only be a matter of a few hours before we catch up completely. Unfortunately, I fear that we must soon reenter our world's skyshield, several hundred miles south of the N'djatwald. We are much too close, and we can feel the effects of the skyshield's pull on the *Princess*. There is no alternative but to carry on.

Eimir 24, 1965: Trickery! I should have known better. As soon as we entered the skyshield, the *Princess* began a dangerous dive. Every beam and mast of the *Princess* screamed in the dizzying fall, but the ship managed to progressively alter her course, heading away from the pole. This beautiful ship sensed the danger and acted on her own to save herself and her crew! She barely avoided the worst and landed heavily on a thick snow bank. The truth of our fate became as brutal as a frigid, antarctic wind howling around us in the night. We were stranded without magical power.

Herr Rolf is a devil of man. He must have been aware this region was *anti-magical*. Fortunately, the effects were progressive. Herr Rolf perceived he could not escape the *Princess*, as she was much too fast for his winged cat. He had to find a way to escape us. He's probably flapping away on his winged cat even now. His assessment of the *Princess's* speed was amazingly accurate—a fine mathematician, that knight. He obviously did not waste his time during his journey aboard our ship.

I will find Herr Rolf even if I must devote the rest of my life to the endeavor. But the task of saving the crew and the *Princess* remains a more pressing matter.

Eimir 25, 1965: Something very strange is happening. Night has now lasted far longer than it should, and the sun still has not risen anew. According to tome three of the *Arcanean Worlds*, by the respected sage Nesfutar, complete night never falls upon the frozen lands, and neither does the sun ever rise high above the horizon there. But here, neither the light of the moon nor that of the sun could be sensed at all.

The crew was given heavy winter gear and completed repairs of the *Princess*. Fortunately she suffered little damage. We are still stranded in this bleak land of ice and howling winds. Magic of any sort has been totally ineffective. The threatening cover of dark clouds hasn't shown any sign of thinning so far. Snow storms occur with discouraging regularity. I estimate our position is due south of the Vulcanian Coast.

The rakasta finally emerged from their cabins, warmly dressed. They had also managed to totally cover their great cats with fur boots and several layers of coats sewn together. Kenju mentioned their cats were used to warm climates and wouldn't last long without protection in these temperatures.

I plan to head a scouting party to seek out native villages for help, probably to the north—or what I surmise is north. In this kind of weather, I hope the remainder of the crew can survive several days without too many difficulties. After that, I fear the *Princess* will have to be abandoned.

Eimir 26, 1965: The sun still hasn't returned. After a long discussion with the crew and our feline guests, it seems the best course would be for me to leave with Kenju and Myojo, his first henchman. The cats would be able to smell their own tracks and return to the *Princess* if we became lost. Traveling in the dark in these conditions—without magic—seems nearly hopeless.

I will be riding the third great cat, while Kenju's other henchman Jiro remains aboard the *Princess*. We would move much faster this way. Talasar argued vehemently against the decision, for I was quite vulnerable without magic and nothing so far could be said about the rakasta's loyalty. If I did not return within five days, my orders to Talasar were to execute Jiro, abandon ship, and proceed due north to the Vulcanian Line.

Burymir 1, 1965: Jiro's great cat has proven to be a difficult mount to control, but I've managed well so far. At least we've been blessed by the speed of these animals. We found no villages, and we lost some time hunting seals and polar bears to feed the cats. It was virtually impossible to keep an accurate orientation. The sky remained overcast, masking the stars, and the uselessness of magic still prevailed.

In the course of our latest hunting expedition, our mounts followed a scent and stumbled upon the frozen remains of a dead winged cat. This must have been

Herr Rolf's mount. So *Herr Rolf* is stranded as well! His cat did not survive the cold, and without his own clerical magic, he could not heal or revive the animal. Fine; then we know he is close.

Fresh prints of Herr Rolf's heavy boots were visible in the snow. According to Myojo, Herr Rolf camped there until recently. Many other footprints and signs of a fight were apparent in the snow, and Myojo concluded the aggressors pursued Herr Rolf back toward the general direction of the Princess—or so I judged, compared to our own footprints.

Ever since this discovery, Kenju and Myojo have acted even more insolent than usual. Kenju's subordinate was so bold as to even lay a hand on his sword's hilt at my order to set camp. Apparently, the two wanted to go after Herr Rolf immediately and scorned the task of seeking help for the *Princess* and the crew. Eventually, Kenju disdainfully nodded his approval. I must use caution while I rest.

Burymir 2, 1965: My caution paid off. The two rakasta made an attempt on my life during my sleep, but I was expecting a move on their part. Kenju was observing from the other side of the campfire when Myojo suddenly reached for his large bow, on the back of his cat. But I was quicker. There are certain things that wizards do instinctively in the face of danger, things done without thinking. That saved my life.

As I uttered the last syllable of the incantation, I suddenly realized the futility of my reaction. I had been powerless for days. But no! Against all hopes, the spell did work! In a split second before the ball of flames flared up, Myojo ducked behind a snow drift, barely escaping a fiery death. His cat wasn't so lucky, however, and it died on the spot. Kenju jumped to his feet, already whirling his katana with blurring speed. But strengthened by my initial success, I drew two wands and roared "Go ahead, kitty! Come find out if they work!"

Instantly circumspect, Kenju hissed at me and lowered his blade. There was no telling if magic would work again. But I won.

Myojo crawled out from behind the pile of melting snow, smoking but alive. The two must have thought they could go after Herr Rolf on their own and return back to Myoshima with the Heldanner. That would have gained them great honor and put us in a position of weakness, subjecting citizens of Her Imperial Majesty to ridicule. Fortunately, we must have unknowingly passed the limits of *anti-magic*. Herr Rolf failed to notice it. How ironic. He could have saved his cat after all! That will be his undoing. If only I could get the *Princess* this far!

I have maintained a safe distance from the two rakasta since the incident. They seem to fear my magic and have obeyed my orders—quite reluctantly of course. We followed the natives' footprints toward the ship, with Kenju riding the lead cat. The now charcoal-hued Myojo trotted at

his best pace between Kenju and I. I, of course, retained the other great cat—humiliating Myojo even more. I will make the stops as few, and as brief as I can.

Burymir 3, 1965: Today we caught up with the natives. They were elves—but more like savages? I would say. Perhaps these people are the remnants of some forgotten tribe lost in the ice centuries ago, afflicted by this bleak lands *anti-magic* curse. Over the centuries, these elves must have then sunk into the abyss of barbarity and historical oblivion. But they still remembered how to fight.

They came by the dozens, screaming down an icy hill at us. I must say that Kenju and Myojo did wonders, chopping away at the howling mass. I, of course, remained mounted, displaying the most contemptuous and unconcerned attitude possible. I suspected my magic was gone again, as we probably had reentered the *anti-magic* zone. I would have died in the matter of a cat's eye blink if either rakasta had suspected my renewed weakness. I caught a few increasingly worried glances from a frantic Myojo as a wailing elven savage almost reached me.

All of sudden, a huge white monster rose from behind a hill. The thing was a hideous sloth, half the size of the *Princess* herself and equipped with flesh-rending teeth. It lunged for the savages, ripped two of them apart, and swallowed them in no time. The rest of tribe fled as swiftly as they came.

The growling sloth then slowly turned on our party. Kenju and Myojo rapidly executed

a strategic retreat, standing behind me. Obviously they expected me to handle the situation. Not knowing what else to do, I remained calm and waited, too. The sloth was poised for attack, staring at me. It hesitated. It sniffed. It snorted.

And it relaxed. I noticed that the monster's eyes had the unmistakable flicker of intelligence. As I was thinking this, I was overtaken by a powerful feeling of warmth. It occurred to me the sloth was empathic; it could sense my feelings and bare its own to me! Apparently it felt only anger for the elven savages. Elves must have been ancestral hunters of its kind.

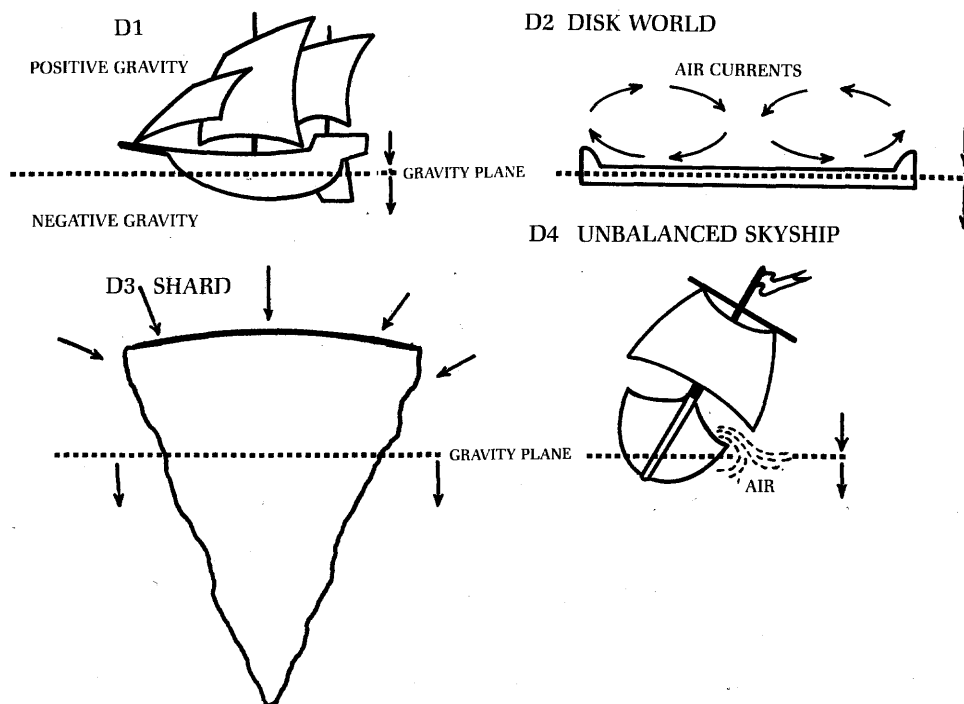
It did not take long for the beast and I to become attuned to one another. Somehow I managed to make it understand I needed its help, and it shuffled over to me like a huge puppy. Minutes later, I sat on the sloth's furry shoulders. Apparently the two rakasta were oblivious to the sloth's empathic powers. Myojo stood there, open-mouthed, until Kenju slapped him in the face and ordered him to mount my winged cat.

We were running short of time. Soon we resumed our journey back toward the *Princess*, along with our fearsome new companion. Herr Rolf would have to wait.

Burymir 4, 1965: We finally made it back on time to the *Princess*. There was no further hindrance from Kenju. Before leaving our last campsite, however, Myojo bowed deeply and presented me with his katana. He had offered me his loyalty! Aha! I could use this. Of course, Kenju was greatly angered, and the two haven't spo-

"Up, Away, and Beyond" Errata

Because of an editorial error, four small diagrams were left out of the layout for "Up, Away, and Beyond" in *DRAGON*® issue #160. The diagrams are presented here, each showing the effects of gravity (according to Bruce Heard) in the universe of the D&D® game.



ken to each other since then, except for occasional hisses and caterwauls.

Our arrival at the *Princess* created great confusion. My sloth wasn't sighted until the very last moment. Its white fur blended very well with the frozen surroundings. A few dozen crossbow quarrels were about to shoot forth when Talasar recognized me. I ordered Kenju to be sent to the brig. Jiro was to remain in his quarters, under guard. I sent Myojo to separate quarters with his gear, free to roam the ship.

Burymir 5, 1965: Talasar and I decided to spend more time with the sloth. It had curled up against the *Princess's* flank like a cub against a she-wolf. We sat next to its chest in the warmth of its fur, while a raging blizzard blanked out the rest of the world.

It was clear that the sloth was eager to help. It could not understand the concept of north or south, but I managed to make it feel that we were seeking warmth for the *Princess*. It took some work to set up the next step.

The *Princess* was eventually fitted with outrigger skis to prevent her from rolling on her sides, and the sloth was harnessed to pull the ship. As the *Princess* slid across the snow, the crew's morale began to improve. Myojo and Xerdon volunteered to mount to the two remaining great cats and scout the surrounding for signs of the elven barbarians. The sloth is moving very fast for its size; I had to stop several times to allow Myojo and Xerdon to catch up and get some rest. We are making great progress over the flat, wind-beaten ice pack, but still no sign of the sun. Why?

Burymir 12, 1965: Despite our great speed, we have not reached the limit of the *anti-magic* region. I suspect the sloth has perhaps taken us in a direction other than what we had expected. Despite this, it still communicated to me that it went "toward warmth." I was concerned. For all I know, it may be heading for a volcano, but we are too far into this journey to turn around now.

There is no sign of Herr Rolf. Without his magic, he must have starved and frozen to death—or perhaps he was captured by the elven barbarians. We may never know.

Burymir 19, 1965: The sun still has not returned. I know not what to think. If we were reaching the edge of the frozen lands, periods of day and night would become evident, but this . . . Darkness has prevailed for days with no sign of change. Yet the sloth does not seem concerned.

Polar bears and occasional monstrosities from this dark world of ice have been sighted and hunted down. Unfortunately, none of these creatures has been kept for study. The need for restocking food supplies has remained a constant concern. Heating is an even worse problem. There are few places aboard where fires may be lit, and even fewer things that can be burned. During our occasional halts, the sloth digs through the ice pack to hunt

and feed itself. Sometimes it returns with a hunk of whale or a mouthful of walrus. Their fat becomes vital for heating.

Xerdon caught two sailors attempting to cut away some of the rigging, hoping to burn that and get some warmth. I loathe the idea of turning the *Princess* into a mere source of firewood. The two were flogged and thrown in the brig.

Burymir 26, 1965: The crew is getting very weak, and desperation has affected even the toughest veterans. Food supplies are minimal. Many men are sick with fever, especially among Lady Abovombe's Cestian contingent, who among all the crew have suffered the most from the cold. Discontent among the crew is getting more apparent each passing day. Weapons have been locked in the armory. Only officers, the most trustworthy boltmen, Myojo, and myself are armed. Magic still does not operate. The sloth still does not seem to be affected by the darkness.

A late note: A large amount of food has been stolen. The guard was ill and fell unconscious during his watch. No trace was found of the stolen supplies. No doubt the culprits have already devoured it.

Nyxmir 05, 1965: Light has begun to return, and just in time. Talasar had major difficulties keeping discipline among the men. Even the Word of Razud brought little strength to his worshippers. A fight broke out, and Talasar barely escaped. The return of the light, as tenuous as it was, calmed the growing psychoses dividing even the oldest of friends.

Nyxmir 12, 1965: Indeed the light is increasing, although it has an unusual reddish tint. The ice, the snow, and the skies all range from deep purple to a fiery amber hue, unlike anything we have seen before. The temperature has risen substantially, and wildlife can be found more readily. Morale is improving among the crew, but uncertainty remains. The sloth persisted in its course, probably led by some Immortal will. It had been a month since we left Herr Rolf's tracks. I have no idea where we are.

Nyxmir 15, 1965: Two men have been found dead. Both the guard on duty at the supply hold and the watchman at the stern had their heads crushed, each by a single blow. More food supplies were stolen, as well as one of the great cats. It wasn't long before Myojo spotted the cat's footprints. Judging from their depth in the snow, one man with some heavy gear has left the *Princess*, probably with enough food for several days.

Nyxmir 16, 1965: No one is missing among the crew, and both Jiro and Kenju are still being detained. How could this be? How could we have had a stowaway for so long without noticing it? Who that could have been is a mystery.

Myojo volunteered to go after the fugitive's track with the last remaining cat, but I refused. There is a better way. I have instructed the sloth to follow the track. The scent was faint, which has slowed

down the huge beast's pace, but I think it is important we find out what happened.

Nyxmir 19, 1965: Myojo spotted the fugitive's last campsite. We knew then who he was. Heavy footprints were found near those of the missing cat—marks left by heavy boots, those of an armored knight.

So it was he whom I thought was dead! Herr Rolf must have discovered the *Princess* and climbed aboard during a snowstorm. Lord Katayama's monolith cannot magically conceal the ship in the *anti-magic* area as it had in the void. No one could have seen Herr Rolf, and of course none of the ship's magical wards would function. To think that he remained concealed within the *Princess's* hull for over a month is unbelievable.

After some investigation, it is now clear that Rolf hid in the plant hold, where I had stored our Cestian gobbler specimen. The carnivorous plant had gone dormant from the extreme cold and thus ignored the knight. Rolf managed to take control of the animated remains of the late Azoth, which reinforced my conviction that Rolf is a powerful cleric. Talasar probably turned our undead Azoth with ease, then sent him back to his task.

Rolf was indeed the one who stole food from the unconscious guard and murdered the others, but those will be the last of his tricks. My magic has returned, and so has Talasar's. Soon we will get to the end of this knight's charade.

Nyxmir 21, 1965: It still isn't right. Light has returned indeed, but now it is night that is amiss! The clouds cleared for a moment, revealing for the first time in over a month the warmth of sunrays—but strangely, the sun is red! It seems much smaller than usual, and most oddly it now stands motionless at the sky's zenith! It is a mystery as to whatever has happened to the Immortal clockwork of the heavens.

Unfortunately, the sloth stopped immediately upon witnessing the sun's appearance. I sensed this was the end of its journey with us. Already we could feel the *Princess* shivering with regained power, as if she were reborn. It was time to soar again into the sky and freedom.

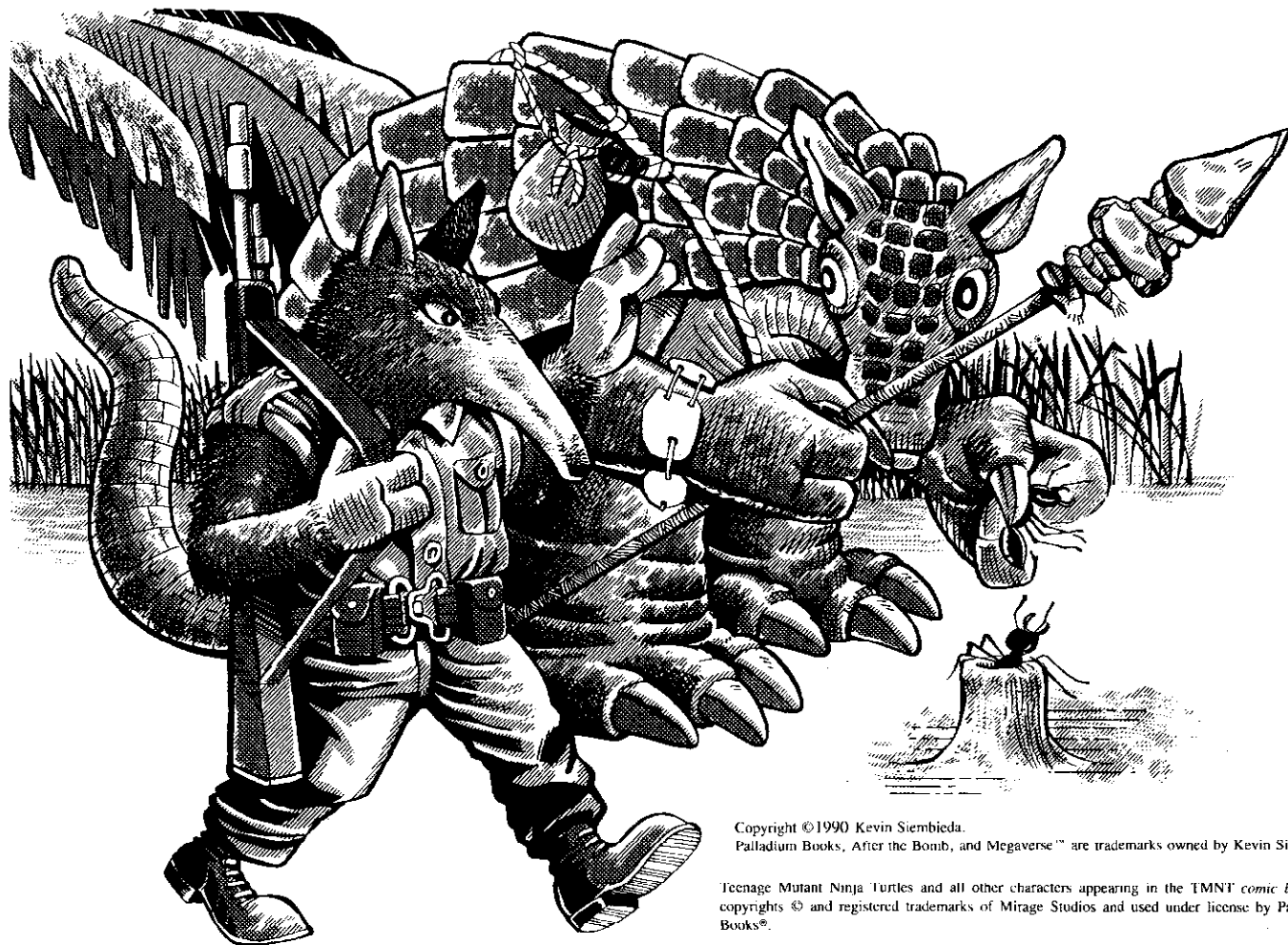
Nyxmir 22, 1965: Finally, the *Princess* was ready to take off. The outrigger skis were discarded, the wings unfolded, and the sails repaired.

As we took off, the sloth roared. A brief moment of sadness overcame my thoughts. Then a roar of equal strength startled us all, as the *Princess* responded in kind to her gargantuan savior. Most peculiar that was. . .

Nyxmir 23, 1965: This is a time of fantastic discoveries for the Sons of Alpha-tia. Upon soaring above the clouds, we discovered a totally different landscape than our own maps depict. This is not our world!

Oddly enough, the new sun really is red. The air remains very hazy to the point

Continued on page 100



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THE ROLE OF Computers

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DragonStrike (SSI)

Saddle up your silver dragon and hit the sky!

Reviews

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

Strategic Simulations, Inc.

675 Almanor Avenue
Sunnyvale CA 94086
(408) 737-6800

DragonStrike

PC/MS-DOS version

\$49.95

DragonStrike is an enormous amount of fun to play. It's a dragon-flight simulator that combines air-to-air and air-to-ground combat from the perspective of a warrior astride a great winged beast. Given the feel of powerful flight and the reassuring weight of the dragonlance resting in its saddle mount, you're ready to do battle with any number of evil dragons.

The land of Ansalon has been overrun by evil Dragonarmies. Only you and the forces of Good can stop the onslaught of

the evil Dark Queen, Takhisis. As a Knight of Solamnia, you ride a good dragon from your base on Sancrist Isle against the enemy hordes, advancing through the three orders of knighthood: the Knights of the Crown, the Knights of the Sword, and the Knights of the Rose. To become one of the latter is a rare privilege; to survive and advance through the 22 different battles in *DragonStrike* is a rare feat as well.

Every mission is fully explained. You can even safely fly over a mission area to get a taste for the battleground—a good way for novice lancers to learn how to effectively guide a dragon in flight. You can use the keyboard, a mouse, or a joy stick to do this. You must also use combinations of keys on the keyboard to control various aspects of the simulator. For example, we

found the mouse was quite effective in controlling the dragon; push forward on the mouse and the dragon climbs, pull back and it dives. Moving the mouse to the left or right causes the dragon to move in those directions. Pressing the right mouse button fires the dragon's primary breath weapon, while pressing the left button fires the dragon's secondary breath weapon. To properly aim the lance, you must use another set of nine keys on the keyboard; you can assign any keys you wish to the flight controls. Your view is from the saddle atop the dragon, so you can easily determine if your lance is properly aimed to strike a target. Navigating the dragon properly saves time and energy in concentrating on adjusting the lance. By moving the dragon in any direction and by keeping the lance in the center position, you can pierce the hide of an evil beast quite nicely!

The vivid graphics screen (ours was in EGA mode) displays not only the main view from the back of your dragon but also your current direction of flight (north, south, east, or west). A height and pitch indicator shows your dragon in relation to the ground and his angle of flight up or down. The amount of breath, power, and speed left to your dragon are shown, as are the remaining hit points for both yourself and your dragon. These values can be displayed as either numeric values or as colored bars. Also on-screen is a Crystal Ball that enables you to determine where enemy forces are located. An Arrow of Enemy Detection shows you where the nearest enemy unit is currently located, and three doses of Keoghtom's Healing Ointment are available. Other magical items found during your adventures are shown on-screen as well.

As you pilot your dragon into combat with an enemy dragon, vicious hand-to-hand and tooth-and-claw combat are handled automatically. As a knight lancer, you can sustain damage only from an attack from above, but don't forget that your life depends upon your dragon; an attack from below would certainly injure him. If enough damage is taken to reduce your dragon's hit points to zero, you'll both fall! Keep an eye on your dragon's power; should his power fall, a good maneuver is to wait until your dragon's power returns to full, then climb and drift for a while. You'll still be pursuing the enemy, but your dragon will get enough rest to be at full power for combat.

Should you succeed and complete a mission, an award ceremony is held. You'll learn if you have gained rank or are entitled to join a new order. You can complete *DragonStrike* no matter which of the three orders of knighthood you are in.

The first mission for new lancers is called "Snow Blind." Your army has left Sancrist Isle to battle Takhisis's forces, and you have been left on the island to watch for enemy white-dragon scouts. Should any scouts appear (and naturally, they do),



DragonStrike (SSI)

you are to hunt them down and prevent them from warning the Evil Queen of the good alliance's plans. Your next mission is entitled "Occupational Hazard." Here you approach the Isle of Cristyne and spot several wyverns about to drop onto members of your force's naval fleet. Wyverns, as you probably know, have deadly sting-ers. Riding your bronze dragon, you can eliminate the wyverns and save the ships. The third mission, "Black Plague," has you in combat against a black dragon that has wreaked havoc on the knights' outpost in southern Ergoth. This dragon is a real sneak; watch out for back attacks!

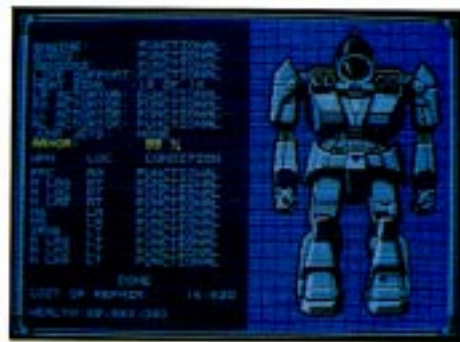
All of the missions are exciting and increasingly dangerous. Your first mount is a bronze dragon; you graduate to a silver dragon and finally to a gold dragon as you join different knightly orders. Considering that the gold dragon has a 190' body and a 159' tail, you'd think little could measure up to his stature. Well, think again! Takhisis's Death Dragon has an armor class of -11 and 200' of body length, with a Death Gas breath weapon! Other forces that oppose you include manticores, siva draconians, and flying citadels—fortresses held aloft by magic.

Included with the game on the back page of the user's manual is a keyboard command diagram to assist gamers in learning key presses for this arcade flight simulator. The copy protection method used is to match two symbols shown on-screen with two symbols in your book. You are then asked to enter a specific numbered word from a specific numbered paragraph on that page, and all is well!

DragonStrike supports the AdLib sound board. One reason for this arcade game's success is the fact that Westwood Associates programmed the material for Strategic Simulations, assuring top quality. You can also change the amount of on-screen

detail to speed up the game, if you wish.

We thoroughly enjoy *DragonStrike*, the latest member of SSI's AD&D® computer games. It is highly original in design and play, offers enormous dollar-to-play value, and is a superior arcade/strategy game. We don't think you'll want to miss this one. Try it out at your dealer and see if you don't agree that *DragonStrike* is highly addictive.



Mechwarrior (Activision)

Activision

3885 Bohannon Drive
Menlo Park CA 94025
(415) 329-0800

Mechwarrior

PC/MS-DOS (EGA) version \$49.95

This game requires a PC/MS-DOS computer running at no less than 8MHz with 512K RAM, or 640K RAM on a Tandy microcomputer. A color monitor is also required. *Mechwarrior* supports EGA, VGA (in EGA emulation) and Tandy 16-color graphics boards. Option support is offered for the AdLib sound board or the Roland MT-32. A joy stick is optional.

If you have played FASA's BATTLETECH® game or Activision's *Battletech* computer game, you can probably guess that *Mechwarrior* involves tactical-level, 3-D combat



MechWarrior (Activision)

using 'Mechs. This is a highly entertaining, edge-of-the-seat combat/adventure game that finds you ultimately controlling an entire lance of 'Mech combat machines (if you're lucky enough to survive your first missions, that is). The programming was managed by the staff at Dynamix, the coders responsible for *A-10 Tank Killer*, *Arctic Fox*, and *Abrams Battle Tank*.

Before you can participate in *MechWarrior*, you must enter the data needed to complete a 'Mech ID and code check. You match the 'Mech picture on-screen with an identical 'Mech pictured in the user's manual, then cross-reference the code check for that 'Mech and enter an authorization code. Once that's accepted, the adventure begins.

You start the adventure having been accused of killing your uncle, Duke Vandenburg, by one Jarris McBrin. Jarris has his eye on your uncle's title, but you've got to prove your innocence by finding the real killers, whose symbol is the deaths skull and who are known collectively as the Dark Wing. Your true name of Gideon B. Vandenburg must remain secret, as a warrant for your arrest has been issued. The warrant carries a reward for those tempted to turn you in. The trials and tribulations you'll encounter in your search are but one annoyance, as you've got to complete your mission in five years.

In order to find the killers, you will need money—lots of money. You can earn money by requesting missions from the various Successor States, that make up the Star League. Missions reward success with hard cash, as well as with equipment you can salvage from the battlefields.

Through exhaustive research and many defeats, we can say that the best contracts awarded at the start of the game are those that are defensive in nature—e.g., defend-

ing a water tower or other installation against a single enemy unit. As you start the adventure with a Jenner 'Mech, try to find defensive contracts in which the enemy force is of like caliber. However, there are a few contracts that are a wee bit off in their calculations of enemy strength; where there are supposed to be one enemy unit, two or three are sometimes the reality.

Jenners are not the strongest of 'Mechs; they are considered light and weigh 20-40 tons. Other 'Mechs you will probably encounter and control include the Locust, Phoenix Hawk, Shadow Hawk, Rifleman, Warhammer, Marauder, and Battlemaster.

With the Jenner, we found a great tactic to use on the slower adversaries was to circle behind them and fire. Not only were we able to take foes out of the action, but our Jenner received no damage whatsoever. Garnering the credits for a successful mission and for salvage helped us move on to new planets in our quest for clues as to the identity of the Dark Wing.

As you will work for various spacefaring political families (houses), it's a wise mercenary who keeps track of how those families feel about you, especially before you try for a contract. Such checks are handled through the NewsNet, where messages of importance are gleaned and posted for you by your software agent. Read the messages thoroughly! It is only through the NewsNet that you'll learn of the Dark Wing's location. And when you do learn of its location, be certain you build your lance before taking the enemy on. That requires money, crews, and 'Mechs, so select assignments carefully.

You can change crew assignments when you wish. Also, when you enter various 'Mech complexes on the planets, you'll sometimes be greeted with important

messages from others using the complexes. Keep your pen and notepad handy.

At the complexes, you can repair, reload, and sell your 'Mechs. It's not uncommon to buy a 'Mech at a reasonable price on a major world, then sell it at a premium on a minor planet. You can build quite a hoard by using this maneuver throughout the galaxy.

When selecting a contract, you can attempt to alter the contract to reflect what you believe your value is in completing the assignment. A total amount for the completion of the mission is revealed in the contract, as well as a percentage of the salvage that you will receive upon victory. Additionally, a final percentage is offered up front. Try to increase these percentages and the total payment; you'll be surprised at how often you can earn far more than the contract initially stipulates. Submit your revised percentages and totals to the house in question, and it'll either accept your terms or you'll see a new contract on-screen (and usually the new contract has upgraded the percentages to reflect your demand for higher amounts). However, you won't always succeed in obtaining higher payments. The house may grow tired of dickering and refuse to offer you a contract. You must be wise enough to figure out how close you can push the house before it closes the contract to you.

To travel from planet to planet, a star map is offered. You can move the mouse cursor over any dot and quickly learn the name of the planet and its leading attribute. For example, those interested in finding the best pizza in the Star League are advised to head for the planet Galuzzo in House Kurita! You can access each planet's database for more information. Access a house, and a list of all aligned planets are displayed. Move the cursor over a planet's name and press RETURN; the Star Map returns, and the flight path from your current location to the new planet is indicated, as well as the cost, in credits, it'll require to get there.

The first undertaking on any new planet should be to go to the local bar and order a drink. Most times you'll be told that it's been pretty quiet and you should come back another day. Occasionally the bartender will reveal critical information to you. When you follow his tips, remember your mission is to clear your name, not to get killed in pointless firefights. Fight only when there is no other course of action.

When you are involved in actual 'Mech combat, the screen reveals 'Mech controls. As with many combat simulators, you have a forward view of the terrain with weapon cross-hairs. The *MechWarrior* 'Mech control screen is quite compact. You can rotate your 'Mech's torso while tracking an enemy 'Mech with weapon cross-hairs, or you can instantly autoalign your 'Mech's torso to the aiming crosshairs. There's a weapon-status board where you select a weapon to fire. Indicators for life support, sensors, gyros, and engines are

all directly below the main viewscreen and are easy to read. A target display shows how much damage you've inflicted on an enemy 'Mech. By using Automatic Weapon Selection and the TAB key, you can fire all your weapons at a single target automatically. You must watch the heat indicator for your 'Mech; should you overheat, you will not be able to move or fire.

Some specific hints for those entering the world of *MechWarrior* include:

- Light 'Mechs can jump over enemy units to get behind them;
- Zanzibar in the Capellan Confederacy has some great buys;
- Lands End is probably a good starting point;
- An assignment to Dustball should be accepted;
- Brown is both helpful and dangerous;
- Stone Arrow;
- Wendall can lead you to Willard;
- Okefenokee; and
- Kearney knows all!

MechWarrior is a great strategy/adventure game. We found that the sound sometimes became monotonous, especially in the bars, but thankfully there is a sound-off option. The game can be played using a mouse, joy stick, or keyboard. We found the keyboard/mouse option best for the adventure portion of the game, and the joy stick most appropriate for 'Mech combat. You can save as many as 12 games in progress, and any can be recalled when you wish.

MechWarrior will have you sitting on the edge of your chair as you take enemy 'Mechs head-on. The combat sequences alone would have been enough for most gamers. Add in the adventure of finding your family's killers based on clues you must find throughout the Star League, and you've got an offering with an extremely high entertainment value. We recommend *MechWarrior* not only to arcaders but also to adventure gamers.

Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Budokan

Commodore Amiga version \$39.95

Martial arts are back again. In *Budokan*, your character learns four different types of martial arts and uses them in a competition called the Budokan. Each style of martial arts has over 25 moves, so the game takes time to master. At the beginning, you enter different buildings to practice karate, kendo, nunchaku, and bo. You can practice the moves by yourself or against one of three skilled opponents. A bar at the top of the screen shows your stamina and ki. Stamina drops as the player performs complicated moves or is hit by the opponent. This bar slowly returns with rest. Ki represents mental power; the more ki, the more damage is



Budokan (Electronic Arts)



Budokan (Electronic Arts)

inflicted with each hit.

After you spar, the computer gives you pointers on how to improve your fighting. You can then enter a sparring building to compete against another human player or against the computer itself. You can even fight the computer using a different form of martial arts; e.g., you can use the bo style while the computer uses karate. When you feel that you have practiced enough, you can enter the Budokan and fight other computerized opponents. You choose which martial art to use for each match. Each style can be used only four times, so use the weaker styles on opponents with less strength and save the oetter-prepared styles for later. If you win, you progress to the next level. If you fail to beat an opponent one of three times, you drop to the next lower level.

Overall, *Budokan* is a refreshing martial-arts game with competition and variety. The moves, however, are a double-edged sword. It is fun to have a variety of attacks and defenses, but some are hard to accomplish, and you might become frustrated when attempting to do one move but ending up with another move that puts

you in a precarious situation. This happened to us a number of times, and we turned off the computer before we took out our frustration on it. The animation and sound were well done. Except for the one negative point mentioned, we recommend *Budokan* to any martial-arts or arcade fan.

News and new products

Accolade (408-985-1700) enters the animated graphic-adventure game category with two new offerings. The first is *Search for the King*. Players assume the identity of Les Manley, an employee of WILL, the lowest-rated television station in New York. The station has put up a reward of \$1 million to anyone who can find the King, the world's greatest and most elusive entertainer. You control the actions of bumbling Les Manley in search of the King, trying as you do so to become familiar with the character. What seems logical may not always be the correct move. The second offering is *Altered Destiny*, wherein players are introduced to a world from another space and time. Designed by author Michael Berlyn (*The Eternal Enemy* and four other science-fiction novels), you



Future Wars (Interplay)

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control P. J. Barret, who is sucked into a television set and enters a fantastic alternate world. Both games are for PC/MS-DOS machines for \$59.95

The Avalon Hill Game Company (301-254-9200) has released *Legends of the Lost Realm* for the Macintosh (\$39.95). A sorcerer's evil rule must be defeated; you avoid traps and enemies as you journey through a treacherous world. Also out is *Combots* for the Commodore 64/128 (and soon for Macintosh and PC/MS-DOS computers). You create robots that must destroy an army of aliens that has landed in the year 2020. You can play the game either solitaire or with a friend. There are more than 300 weapons combinations, seven scenarios, and three modes of play, all for \$24.95.

Cinemaware (805-495-6515) is releasing three games. *Wings*, a World War I simulation/action/adventure game for the Amiga, recreates the life of a rookie pilot who joins an elite flight squadron during the intense air battles over Europe. It uses the various aircraft from the war in dog-fights, bombing, and strafing runs in over 2,000 different missions—for \$49.95. Next there's *3 in Three*, an animated fantasy that is a treasure hunt of puzzles, each adding an episode to an expanding story. There are 90 puzzles, 60 scenes, and no dead ends that force you to start over. This is for the Macintosh for \$49.95. Finally, *Brainblaster*, is a double game package that includes *Xenon 2* and *Bombuzal*. Both are quality action games with 3-D isometric points-of-view, for Amiga, Atari ST, and PC/MS-DOS computers (\$39.95).

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) will ship its first 16-bit Sega Genesis video game products this summer, including *Populous* and *Budokan*. Other NES titles are currently being worked on.

From Interplay Productions (714-545-9001) comes *Future Wars: Adventures in Time* for the Amiga and Atari ST. This game uses the Cinematique system to enable the mouse to control inventory management, conversation, and character movement. The point-and-click interface uses a series of pop-up text and command windows to eliminate the need for a language parser. You start the adventure working in a modern city, then uncover a time machine that takes you back to the Middle Ages. There you find an intergalactic plot that brings you face-to-face with the ultimate threat to mankind. Mankind's future depends upon your ability to criss-cross through time, solve puzzles, defeat a wide assortment of mutant monsters and alien storm troopers, and perform a rescue or two. The price is \$49.95 for Amiga and PC/MS-DOS versions.

Konami Inc. (708-215-5100) has released several new programs plus a new voice command video-game accessory for use with Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) zapper games. Called the *Laser Scope*, this sleek, plastic headset utilizes an eyesight target locator and voice-activated firing

sequence that allows players to easily manipulate the control pad for greater interaction with the game. This multi-use headset offers a removable eyesight for a stereo headset option, a room silence feature and sound enhancer for NES games, and a 15' extension cord.

Mindcraft (800-525-4933) has debuted *The Keys to Maramon*. The Island of Maramon is having problems. Monsters emerge from its cellars and caverns every night to terrorize its citizens and loot the buildings. You play a hero or heroine hired by the town to protect Maramon. Every night involves combat; every day involves a visit the town's shops and buildings for equipment, supplies, and information. You select one of four heroes. The price is \$39.95 for C64/128 and \$49.95 for PC/MS-DOS computers.

Clue corner

Champions of Krynn (SSI)

1. Remember, draconians each have a different way of dying. Baaz turn to stone, kapak melt into harmful pools of acid, and bozak explode. With baaz, the main difficulty is in keeping your weapon. After a fight with a non-draconian foe, get his weapon, whether it be a broad sword or a mace—anything! Keep this weapon, then use it when your normal weapon is lost within a dying baaz.

2. In Throtl, it's safe to rest in a room after you've killed its inhabitants—usually. In the catacombs below Throtl, it's safe to rest only in the treasure room. When resting in unsafe rooms, always settle your party into a corner with no doors. That way, wandering monster attacks are minimized.

3. The flail and chain mail of the high priest (who appears in Throtl after discovering the party's disruption of the conversion) are magical (+1).

4. Use the disk asked for when you enter a city as a hint. "A" is the easiest, while "F" is the end of the game.

5. At the second outpost, you'll be asked to do a lot of things. At the commandant's HQ, you'll find the roster listed in *order of difficulty*. Do not attempt a mission greater than the first mission.

6. The Dragonlance is in Gargath, but it's hard to find. The entrance is in the large house, in the corner of the room containing the priest, undead, and snakes. The keep itself is pretty tough.

7. When attempting to pass the knight's test of honor, remember one thing: These are knights. Knights are good. Also, do not take anything during the test of greed. When the game asks for a character to step through the ring of fire or to answer a question, make certain your knight is the one to complete the action—even if he has only one hit point remaining. Don't worry about being hurt or killed, even in the fight against undead dragons, until after you've rescued the knight's spirit and he

has healed you. There's a surprise in store for you.

Chris Carmen
No address given

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

Do you desperately need experience points for a character? After the fighting has stopped, continue the battle. Then make all of your characters flee, save for the one who needs the experience points. Watch the total XP mount!

If you need to get rid of some money but don't want to drop it, create a character just for storing money, then dump it all on that character. The same advice goes for scrolls or strange weapons.

Jason Dunn
Calgary, Alberta

1. Complete a bit of adventuring to pick up rumors and experience before heading for Essembra. Cast all defensive spells before heading for Hap, as you will be attacked by three black dragons on the way to that area. Make certain that your cleric has memorized Slow or Neutralize Poison.

2. A female PC will allow the party to accept a commission from a female drow called Silk. A sly, highly charismatic character can gain experience for the party by talking to salamanders. Crimdrac can be defeated by a combination of Magic Missiles and magical swords.

3. Once you are transported to the top of Dracondras' tower, you have the choice of fighting him or the dragons. If you run, the dragons attack.

4. On your way down through the tower, you have the following encounters at the bottom of each set of stairs:

- a. a drow lord (AC -5, 106 hp, shield with Glyph of Pain, casts Haste on himself);
- b. an illusion (say "no" to it);
- c. a glyph-trapped scroll; and
- d. a set of trapped (folding) stairs.

Any character with 18s in wisdom and intelligence will win the trial of the sphere.

5. Position your fighter/mages in the first two slots of your party. Dracondras's Lightning Bolts will reach them. If you can, make sure they cast a Minor Globe of Invulnerability before this encounter. Dracondras has cast this on himself as well, and he also casts Fire Shield when he is physically threatened.

6. Some tavern tales you've heard may be true. The Mulmaster Beholder Corps rumor is true. Stay on the first floor of the tower under Dagger Falls to find the Corps; they all have +4 long swords, as well as a few friends.

Kevin O'Collier
Camp Stanley, Korea

Dragon Wars (Interplay)

1. There are several things that must be done to win this game. When you are creating your characters, make certain each one possesses the swim skill. Make

two magic-users, one skilled in high magic and the other in druid magic. (Later in the game will come a method to obtain a druid as well as a sun magic-user, so it's not totally necessary to create those magic-users at the start of the game.) Create another character with high strength and fist-fighting scores (at least 20 strength, 20 dexterity, and 6 in fist-fighting). Fist-fighting will save your characters from a fist fight. Also make a character with 24 dexterity so he can hit first (I included climb, city lore, lockpick, hiding, and bureaucracy in this character as well).

2. In Purgatory, map the entire city. Make certain you don't fight the king's guard and pikemen, as they are really hard to defeat. There is a 1,000 gold reward for defeating Humbada. The arena contest is not required, but it does give your characters experience and the feeling of accomplishment.

3. There are three methods of escaping from Purgatory. One is risk free, the second is a little more risky, and the third will result in death. Don't go into the Apsu waters! Try this: Go to the northwest tower, face west, go forward, turn left, go south down to the southwest tower, turn west, and you're out of Purgatory. At the slave camp, don't fight; talk to them and you will obtain a lot of information.

4. In the slave camp, explore. The old man likes the fact that you use magic, but no points are lost. The individual you can obtain here doesn't seem very useful.

5. In Forlorn you may need extra experience to win the fight with the creatures in the ruins. Explore the bridge, as there are clues and treasure there. You must pay an amount equal to the number of people times 10 to cross the bridge. Don't fight them, as they are quite powerful.

6. On the Isle of the Sun, there is a lot to do in the Magic Forest. First, there is treasure to the west near the water. In the building, use the horn if you have a character with at least 22 strength—and congratulations, you now have a new druid. Save at least two mushrooms.

7. In Phoebus, go to the northeast area. There is a tavern where a sun magic-user can be found. The dogs have treasure. On the ninth day in the prison, there is a way to escape. Hide to get past the guards and explore. Find a shovel, or climb to get to the stairs. The word is Halifax. Then enlist in the Army. In the camp, go north; you will be in Byzanople.

8. In Byzanople, find the dwarf and go down the stairs. Don't fight the woman in white and red. Follow the directions of the men. In the city square is a secret passage. Go in, making sure all of your characters' health and magic abilities are at their highest levels and that you have two dragon stones for each magic-user. Save your game before and after the fight.

9. On King's Island, first go to the insane area to the south. There are three useful items there: the signet ring (which you must use to get out of the area), the

branches, and the stone head. For the list of where to go to find each stone part, look at Quag. When you are finished there, leave. The dungeon is pretty boring. You still have the magic quiver, right? Use the Gatlin Bow with the magic quiver and look at the damage caused. It works at a 20' range. Explore Kingshome.

10. In Quag can be found the places to obtain the stone parts: the stone arms are at the ruins on Forlorn Island, in the dungeon; the stone head is in the insane area; the stone torso is in Necropolis; and the stone hands are in Freeport.

George Lane
APO, NY

1. Make your own characters. Don't transfer them from *The Bard's Tale I-III*. Sure, you retain their lesser magical skills, but their skills are bad. The best four characters to start with include:

—Low magic, high magic, arcane lore, town lore, high intelligence and spirit, and bow weapons skill;

—Low magic, high magic, bandage, forest lore, high intelligence and spirit, and crossbow weapons skill;

—Climb, lockpick, high strength and health, and a weapons skill (one character should have sword skill and the other two-handed sword skill, so the two most important and powerful weapons won't have to be used by the same person later on; those two weapons are the Freedom sword and the Holy Lance); and

—Bandage, bureaucracy, high strength and health, and a weapons skill.

2. Druid skills will be made available later in the game (by wrestling a god), and sun spells can be found in a tavern in Phoebus. Don't waste your starting points acquiring these skills. As you gain levels, increase your characters' health, dexterity, and either spirit for magicians or strength for warriors.

3. Before you venture from Purgatory, complete the following:

—Acquire all lesser spells for your spellcasters. If you find the right shop, the spells are free;

—Defeat the gladiators as you will be given an item that helps you leave the continent;

—Find Urlik; who is in a tavern in the northeast—he's a great fighter and not a bad wrestler;

—Find the power regeneration source in the southeast tower; and

—Leave an offering at Irkalla's statue as this will be beneficial to you later in the game.

4. I found five ways to leave Purgatory, listed in order of increasing risk:

—Sell yourself as a slave, as this is one of the safest and easiest ways out. You'll have to solve a couple of puzzles, though. If you select this method, remember that dying men love water. Good luck; you're going to need it.

—Go to the Underworld. I advise that you wait until your characters become

very experienced.

—Swim to safety (extremely difficult).

—Find one of the secret doors in the walls.

—Hide in a sack and get thrown over the wall! All you have to do is to find the smelly wall.

John Head
Wheaton IL

1. In the middle of the city of Necropolis is a secret door that leads into a large compound. Nergel dwells within. Make sure you have a mushroom to give to him.

2. If a party member dies, the only way to bring him back to life is to use the magic pool under Necropolis.

Daniel "Beeb" Inger
Suffern NY

1. In the Byzanople dungeon, you are advised to surrender if asked to do so.

You'll also find an empty treasure chamber whose stairs lead up to the city itself.

Locate a locked door; it leads to crypts within which you'll find undead soldiers protecting a buried warrior who possesses a magic axe.

2. If you wonder how to take passage to Lansk from the Old Dock, why not try putting on the garb of pilgrims? We hear pilgrims travel free of charge.

3. Send a party member who possesses nimble fingers into the barracks just south of the heavily guarded bridge. Many are asleep inside, but one near the door possesses a valuable object in his pocket. This object might be useful on a strongbox also located within the barracks.

The Lessers

MechWarrior (Activision)

A good salvage percentage can sometimes bring in more money than the regular payment for assignment completion. Davion offers the best contracts, but be careful of a contract that looks too good; you'll be in over your head.

Buy the biggest 'Mechs when you can afford them. Having more 'Mechs will get you bigger contracts. I managed to acquire two Warhammers and a Battlemaster for the final battle in addition to my original Jenner.

Having a fast jump-capable 'Mech for the final battle can give you the victory with the least amount of damage (it is hoped). Remember, Dark Wing's 'Mechs are a lot better than the house 'Mechs.

David Begley
Teaneck NJ

It's September, time for our readers to pick up their pens and postcards and mail in their votes for the best software adventure of the year! When voting, please specify the system version of the software for which you are voting (PC/MS-DOS, Macintosh, Apple II, etc.). The results of the voting will be published in our December column. Thanks for your interest and your vote!

Ω

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“I love leftovers!”

By now, you've all gone out and purchased the MU6 *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ 1990 Character Updates* book. This 256-page compendium contains a myriad of Marvel characters never before put into the game's statistics, plus important updates on your favorite characters, like Spider-Man's Captain Universe powers. The designers, however, had more characters than they had room for in the book, so DRAGON® Magazine has grabbed up four of the characters that didn't make the final cut. We present two heroes this month and will publish two villains in November tissue #163). Also look for a special Halloween “MARVEL-Phile” next month by Dale A. Donovan.

Special thanks to Steven Schend, Judy Gifford, Peggy Cooper, and Barb Nish for their assistance in compiling this column.

T

HE MARVEL®-PHILE

by David E. Martin, Chris Mortika, Scott Davis, and William Tracy



NORTH, DAKOTA™

P	GD(10)
A	RM(30)
S	TY(6)
E	EX(20)
R	GD(10)
I	RM(30)
P	TY(6)

Health: 66

Karma: 46

Resources: EX(20)

Popularity: 20

BACKGROUND**Real Name:** Dakota North**Occupation:** Private investigator**Legal Status:** U.S. citizen with no criminal record**Identity:** Publicly known**Place of Birth:** Unrevealed**Marital Status:** Single**Known Relatives:** Samuel "S. J.," father; Richard, brother**Base of Operations:** Mobile, with branch offices in New York City; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Tokyo, Japan**Past Group Affiliations:** Head of Dakota North Investigations**Present Group Affiliation:** None**KNOWN POWERS****Talents:** Dakota North has Martial Arts E, Guns, and Marksman skills. Her Reason is Remarkable as a Detective. She gets a +1CS to her Agility rank when performing gymnastic maneuvers.**Contacts:** Through her dad, Dakota has connections with the CIA. The international scope of her business has also led to her cooperation with Interpol. She knows the Punisher and the pre-teen super hero group, Power Pack.**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES**

Dakota North is a determined young woman with good business sense and superb detective skills. Because of her many talents and successful exploits, North has gained world fame as a private investigator.

North could be encountered when she opens an office in your campaign's major city. She could meet your heroes while working on the same case, or she could be hired by the heroes to do some investigative legwork that they cannot perform themselves. North could—unknowingly—accept a case from a nondescript villain to investigate the civilian identity of one or more of your campaign's heroes.

HISTORY

Dakota North is the daughter of Samuel J. North, a retired agent of the CIA. Little is known of Dakota's early life other than at a relatively young age, she chose a career as a freelance private investigator. Her business is apparently quite successful in that it currently supports four branch offices around the world.

In North's earliest recorded case, she was hired by Major George C. Cooper, a former intelligence agent and associate of North's father, to protect Cooper from the operatives of an international arms dealer, Sheik Ibn Bheik. Fearing for his safety, Cooper passed a cartridge of experimental quickly dissipating nerve gas hidden inside a pen case to North's younger brother, Ricky. After chasing her wayward brother

across most of Europe, North was captured by Bheik along with her brother and an associate, Amos. In escaping, North lost the pen to Bheik, who subsequently accidentally released its deadly contents. Bheik and his men were killed.

A subsequent case of North's involved the pre-teen super hero group, Power Pack, and the vigilante known as the Punisher.

STICK™**F** AM(50)**A** RM(30)**S** GD(10)**E** RM(30)**R** TY(6)**I** UN(100)**P** MN(75)**Health:** 120**Karma:** 181**Resources:** PR(4)**Popularity:** 0 (25 to martial-arts experts)**BACKGROUND****Real Name:** Unknown**Occupation:** Leader of order of martial artists, sensei, pool hustler**Legal Status:** Unknown**Aliases:** Master**Identity:** The general public was unaware of Stick's fighting abilities.**Place of Birth:** Unknown**Marital Status:** Unknown**Known Relatives:** None**Base of Operations:** New York City and atop a mountain at an unknown location**Past Group Affiliations:** Unnamed order of martial-arts masters**Present Group Affiliations:** None**KNOWN POWERS***Proximity Sense.* Unearthly rank combat sense. Stick could not be blindsided, and this ability worked even in darkness.*Enhanced Senses.* Applied to taste, touch, hearing, and smell (Stick was blind);

Amazing power rank

Telepathy. Excellent power rank*Bio-Energy Drain.* Amazing power rank, three area radius. By mentally linking with another member of his martial-arts group, Stick and his fellow member could drain 50 Health points each, per round, from every enemy within three areas. After draining 1,000 points of bio-energy, the drainer's body exploded. Stick and his partner could do nothing else while draining life energy. If less than 1,000 Health points were drained, Stick and his helper each made an Endurance check on the Stun column.**Weapons:** Stick's weapon of choice was a

quarterstaff with which he could do Good damage. When fighting with the staff, his Fighting rank was considered to be Unearthly. Stick could use his staff to deflect arrows and thrown weapons such as shurikens. This action requires a successful Agility FEAT roll.

Talents: Stick was a martial-arts master and knew all five types of Martial Arts (A through E). He was also a Weapons Master and a Weapons Specialist with his "stick" (quarterstaff). He had the Trance and First Aid talents.**Contacts:** Stick was the leader of a group of six other martial-arts masters. He helped Daredevil when the latter was learning how to use his radar sense. Stick also knew Black Widow, and he taught some skills to Elektra.**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES**

Stick was a taciturn, stern fellow. He was a harsh taskmaster when training someone, crankily pointing out a person's mistakes no matter how well that person did. But he was also a brave and generous man who was willing to give up his life to save his friends.

In your campaign, Stick might have been the trainer of any martial artist or weapon-using hero or any hero with proximity sense or heightened senses. Although he died in the comics, he could still be alive in a game-campaign world. He could act as a counselor for heroes, guiding them and occasionally providing them with important information. He and his group of martial-arts masters could also provide a great place in which injured or hunted heroes or NPCs could hide.

HISTORY

Nothing is really known about Stick's early life before he befriended Matt Murdock (Daredevil). Stick was a blind man who had somehow developed a special "proximity sense" and enhanced his remaining senses. These abilities allowed him to sense far more than a normal human could.

Stick became the leader of an elite group of warriors based on the top of an unnamed mountain. Stick was a master of martial arts and was especially adept in using a long stick in combat, from which he took his name. The members of the order developed a number of mental powers that were either psionic or mystical in nature. Each member of the order was required to rid himself of all destructive emotions.

Stick's group spent many years fighting the Hand, a Japanese-based group of ninjas who hired themselves out as mercenaries and assassins. The members of the Hand served a demonic entity known as the Beast.

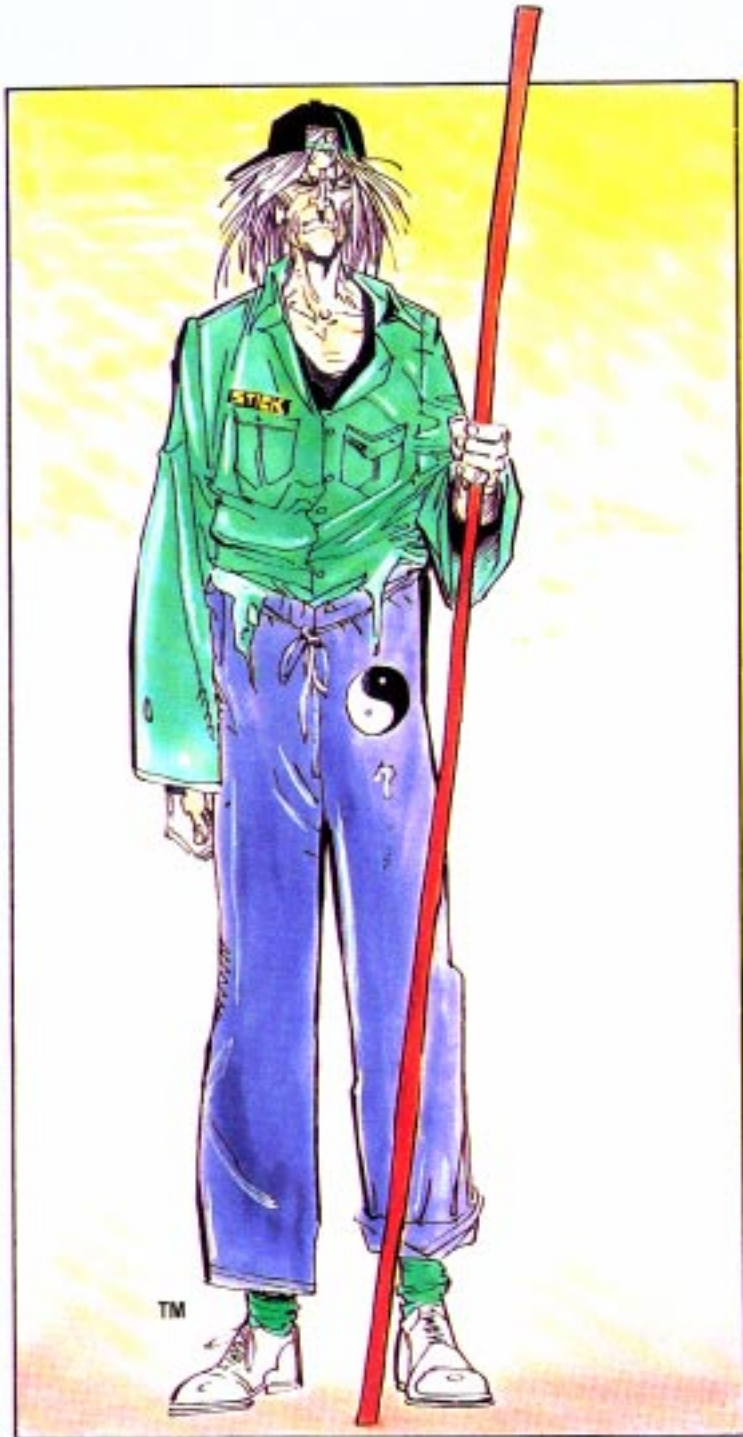
Long ago in New York City, a young man named Matt Murdock was accidentally struck in the face by a canister containing radioactive waste. The radiation blinded him but also provided him with a unique "radar sense." After leaving the hospital, Matt was found by Stick, who taught Matt how to use his new radar sense, which was similar to Stick's proximity sense. Stick also taught Matt various methods of hand-to-hand combat.

Later, while enrolled at Columbia University, Matt met Elektra Natchios and fell in love with her. After Elektra's father, a Greek Ambassador, was killed by terrorists, Elektra left Matt and the United States, going to Japan. There she was trained under a sensei who had been thrown out of Stick's order because he had not been able to completely rid himself of all his destructive emotions. Elektra reached a high level of martial prowess, but she was still filled with hate because of the death of her father. Elektra's sensei told her about Stick's order, hoping that it could teach Elektra to achieve inner peace.

Stick accepted Elektra as a pupil and trained her for one year. She became even better at combat and began to develop the mental powers that the members of the order possessed. Stick eventually had to expel her as she had still not been able to rid herself of her hatred. Elektra joined the Hand for a time, then became a freelance assassin.

Years later, Matt Murdock (as Daredevil) met Elektra again. Shortly after that, Murdock lost his radar sense after being caught in the concussive force of a bomb blast. Murdock found Stick, who was pool-hustling in New York City, and Stick helped Matt develop his radar sense again.

A while after that, the Hand began a campaign to kill all the members of Stick's secret order, which at that time had only seven members, including Stick. After Stick was attacked by four Hand assassins in New York City, he summoned the other members there. Only three other members arrived: Claw, Shaft, and Stone (the other members had apparently already been killed). Stick and his fellow members were able to kill Kirgi, the Hand's deadliest warrior. Later that night, a horde of Hand assassins attacked Stick and his friends at Matt Murdock's apartment. Daredevil and the Black Widow were also involved in the battle. Claw was killed during the fight. Stick and Shaft then joined hands to drain the life force of the remaining Hand members. Stick ordered Stone to help Daredevil and the Black Widow escape. Stone fled with his two charges, reluctantly leaving Stick and Shaft behind. The bodies of Stick and Shaft exploded shortly thereafter, having been filled with more life energy than they could contain.







Lorin kept to the shadows as he edged closer to the flickering glow of the campfire. He moved only a few inches each time, cautiously closing the gap between himself and the two men seated cross-legged by the fire. Not a stone or leaf was disturbed by his passing, which is the way he wanted it. The pair of horses hobbled to a stake some yards from the camp heard him well enough, but they paid no mind.

The dirk felt hard and comforting in his hand, and for the seventh time he debated whether to kill both men outright or simply hold them for whatever food and valuables they carried. Lorin did not enjoy killing, not even now with a contract waiting to be fulfilled. Besides, an assassin with a reputation for indiscriminate murder was little better than a cutthroat, and about as reliable. He had no desire to build such a name for himself his first few days in the profession.

A sudden growl from his belly caused him to freeze just as he began another movement forward. He sank down to the hard surface of the desert, seeking the shadows. Counting each breath until he reached thirty, he rose again and looked toward the campfire. Neither man had stirred from his place.

Enough of such nonsense. Lorin of Bredith was no cutthroat to be caught by the protests of a hungry belly. Had he not come all this way across the desert to dispatch Mellenar to his grave; and at a lord's request, no less? He would hold the pair at knife point once he got closer. The night would mask his position long enough for him to be off before they could fathom what was happening.

Lorin quickened his movements, sliding silently into the ring of light cast by the fire. He disliked exposing himself so. Darkness was a friend he could trust. Being one with shadows for so long made him wary in any place where none were cast.

One of the men, the larger of the two, reached toward the metal pot hung by posts above the fire. Lorin detected the rich smell of a meat stew, and his stomach pulled at him again. He held the dirk firmly in his hand, ready to strike, and moved toward the man's back. That was when the light left the world.

Lorin felt a presence surround him—something animal, wild and full of anger—and then he was rolling in the dust, clawing at some black creature that covered him like a foul smelling blanket. It clogged his eyes and ears, slipping down into his throat and gagging him. He struck at the thing with his blade, and streaks of light from the fire appeared where he slashed but were swallowed instantly by the flowing darkness.

Lorin's mind began to deaden; his thoughts became unclear. He wondered if this was how it was to die. He felt as though his body floated in a pool of still water and realized without fear he was no longer breathing. The darkness became thicker before his eyes closed, and his last thoughts were of money he would never collect on his contract.

Those thoughts were the first he came back to, and when he opened his eyes he saw he was still holding the dirk. The smell of food was strong about him, and he

Shadow Play

by John P. Buentello

Illustrations by Ken Widing

shifted his eyes to stare into the fire he lay beside.

"There is no need for the knife," a deep voice said. Lorin turned toward the sound, keeping the dirk raised, ready to strike.

The man who sat before him was heavily muscled, with cold black eyes that refused to return the fire's warmth. He grinned from behind a full growth of beard and reached for the cup that lay in the sand before him. Lorin saw the flash of silver on his fingers and counted at least a dozen rings before the beefy hand withdrew with the cup.

"That will not do you any good," the large man said, taking a drink from the cup. He wiped his beard on a satin sleeve and smiled again. "If I wished you dead, you already would be."

"From you, or from the one seated behind me?" Lorin had heard the clumsy movements of the smaller man at his back. He guessed the other was just within striking distance. If he had to, he could stab backward at the man and have enough time to throw the dirk at the other man's heart before they could move against him. The thought of killing his first men made him shudder for a brief moment.

The large man grinned again and finished his drink. He motioned toward Lorin's rear, and the smaller man stepped into view. "Kagge would not be the one to worry about, although he did ask my permission to kill you before you woke."

"And I still think we should," Kagge said, squatting next to the other man. The small man was stout but solid, with a sad face that almost made Lorin want to laugh. "He could be dangerous to us."

"Only if he carries disease," the other man said. Lorin's hand tightened about the handle of the blade, his anger rising at the insult. Before he could move, something brushed at his back, and he saw the edge of the darkness grow closer about him.

"No slight given," the large man said calmly. "As you can see, however, I am fully protected. If your temper is a short one, then perhaps you should go back to the desert now."

Lorin watched the dark, formless shape withdraw into the night again. He let out a slow breath and sheathed his blade. "As long as I'm here, I might as well eat," he said, then added, "I am Lorin of Bredith."

The large man nodded. "You are a long way from home. I am Pelar, of the world these days, soon to be exclusively of Tanske. You're welcome to our food."

Lorin spooned a healthy portion of stew into the bowl that Kagge offered him and sat with his back against the darkness. Somewhere behind him, the thing that had attacked him moved almost silently.

"Where are you bound?" Pelar asked, reaching to pour wine from a flask into Lorin's offered cup.

"Tanske also. I do not seek my home there."

"Are you a trader then?"

Lorin nodded, watching both men's eyes. Pelar's were ice cold in their blackness. "Of sorts. I am always on the lookout for opportunities. Why do you seek to make Tanske your home? Are you from there?"

Pelar shook his head, and a scowl briefly flashed across his face. "No, but all I wish is there. Tell me, have you heard of Lord Mellenar?"

Lorin simply shrugged, wondering if the other man could sense the tension in his face. Why did he have to be so exposed now? In the light he was no good. Questions and answers were for diplomats, not for him.

"He is now Lord of Tanske," Pelar said. "A warrior, but the people there seem to think he makes a good leader as well. Tomorrow he becomes a warrior once more. After that, Tanske will be without either."

Lorin felt his stomach turn despite the food that now lay within it. If Pelar meant to battle Mellenar for the leadership of the town, he might never collect his payment. He was beginning to regret ever stepping foot out of Bredith.

"Why do you want to kill this Mellenar?"

Pelar's scowl deepened, and deep in his black eyes a fire began. "Mellenar and I were comrades, from the Battle of Roelein to the day Lord T'lain knighted us full warriors in the service of the gods. He was a brave fighter but limited in his vision. I found other ways to serve the cause—ways he disliked."

Lorin's gaze swept back toward the darkness, watching as it flowed and ebbed along its edges, the animal presence close now. He did not have to ask what kind of ways Pelar spoke of. He had yet to meet the knight who felt kinship with one who gave himself to the dark arts.

"He was a fool to spurn my friendship," Pelar said, pouring himself another cup of drink. "I found ways to bring our lord more power than anyone dreamed. He could have stood by me."

Lorin felt for the dirk in its sheath. "What happened?"

"He convinced the lord I was evil and had me driven out. He drove out all who practiced with me and scattered us over the desert."

Including another who now wished him dead, Lorin thought. He hadn't bothered to ask why Lord Crespian had placed a contract on Mellenar's life. It had been enough, when he went to the Lord of Bredith seeking his first contract, to be given such a generous assignment. It made sense to him now why the lord would send a novice. A true assassin would never have touched the job.

"So you plan to fight him now?" Lorin asked.

Pelar laughed, sending a roar out into the darkness. The black shape at Lorin's back shuddered and began to move forward. Lorin felt his skin crawl as it advanced, and was ready to dive into the fire if it came any closer. Pelar motioned once, and the thing retreated again into the darkness.

"I would be a fool to face Mellenar in combat. He was the best warrior in the lord's army, and if the rumors are correct, he's lost none of his skill. I've been hearing tales of his exploits in keeping Tanske safe from desert raiders since I began this trip."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

The large man scratched at his beard. "I plan to kill him."

"And spread his bones across the city," Kagge said, drinking deep from the flask he held. "Then we rule in his place and take his woman. I will enjoy that."

Pelar cast him an angry look, and the other man grew silent. "You felt the power of the bothra when you tried sneaking into this camp. Do you think even a knight could live through that?"

Lorin did not reply. He'd heard of the bothra, the shadow creatures that those who followed the dark arts were said to employ. If Pelar sent a bothra against Mellenar, the Lord of Tanske was as good as dead, and Lorin's first commission as good as lost.

"You did not say why you were bound for Tanske," Kagge said. he poked the sharp end of a branch into the fire, watching Lorin steadily. "How do we know you won't tell Mellenar that we're here?" He turned toward Pelar, crouching close to him like a dog to its master. "I still say he should die."

Pelar shook his head and fixed the assassin with a gaze as dark as the night. "It doesn't matter. Let him howl it to the wind if he wishes. Nothing can stop the bothra from killing the man whom its master commands it to seek. The creature will not be stopped." He smiled again and sat back. "Perhaps you *should* tell Lord Mellenar, if you get the chance. I would enjoy thinking of him running in fear from me."

Lorin nodded and stood then, backing slowly from the pair. He did not bother to reach for his blade. The madman before him would have instructed the bothra to destroy anyone who threatened its master. He allowed the darkness to swallow him once more and fled into the desert.

The sun was just footing the distant hills when Lorin reached the outskirts of Tanske. The wall guards regarded him with sleepy looks as he passed through the city gates but did not challenge him. The streets of the city, which should have been filled with those who made their living through the night, were bare and silent. Mellenar apparently liked his city quiet at night. Lorin could understand why Pelar and the Lord of Bredith sought the life of such a man.

A merchant setting up his wares for the day's work provided Lorin with instructions for reaching Mellenar's dwelling. He smiled when he spoke of the Lord of Tanske, and Lorin was surprised to hear real affection in his voice.

Mellenar's home was not a large one, and Lorin noted that it was built in the same manner as all the other homes along the lane. He sat on a stoop across from the dwelling and waited. There was something bothering him about this knight-turned-lord, and it was more than just the thought of losing his money.

The morning sunlight flooded the nearby square before life began stirring in the Lord of Tanske's home, and Lorin pushed himself into the shadows cast by the stoop's awning. He watched while a half-dozen children of varying ages spilled into the tree-lined lane.

A man and woman followed close behind. The man was tall and well built, with a smile that spread wider each time one of the children ran before him. The woman he held stared up at him with loving eyes and left his side only to pick up a boy who had fallen from a low branch of one of the trees.

Lorin pulled the dirk from his sleeve and palmed it, the point digging into the flesh of his fingertips. Deep within him, he felt a different sort of cutting pain. He broke from the shadows and crossed the lane, squinting against the glaring sun.

"Lord Mellenar?"

The knight turned at the sound of his name, and Lorin saw for the first time the large broadsword at his side. The Lord of Tanske made no move to reach it but pushed his wife back behind him.

"I don't recognize you," Mellenar said, his eyes dropping to regard the hand where Lorin held his blade ready. "You're a stranger here in Tanske."

Lorin nodded and stopped before the lord. He nodded toward the woman, watching her frightened eyes attempting to size him. Mellenar turned back to her and cupped her chin in his hand. "Asala, take the children to the square. I'll be there shortly."

Lorin waited for the woman to usher the children down the lane. The blade hidden in his hand burned with the heat of the morning sun. A surge of disgust filled him. He turned to Mellenar again, slipping the blade back into its sheath. "We must talk, Lord."

"Who has sent you?" Mellenar asked. Still he did not make a move toward his own weapon.

"A fool, it seems," Lorin answered. He thought again of all the gold that had been shown to him back in Bredith. He thought of never being hungry again, and of forever living deep within the shadows of the world. "But not as big a fool as the one I met in the desert. I bring regards from a wizard called Pelar. I believe he was once a friend of yours."

Mellenar nodded, but his expression did not change. "He was a friend. He is no longer. If you are here to help destroy this city, know that it will not matter if I die. The council will never give up what we have fought so long to acquire."

"There doesn't seem to be much fighting going on now."

Mellenar nodded. "A hard-won peace. Too many here have lost good friends. We've established treaties with the neighboring cities. All we wish now is our own place."

Lorin looked down the lane toward the square where Mellenar's wife and children waited. "You have given this place a new life, it seems. I agree it is fair to give it a chance to thrive, but I think it needs its warriors, too. It needs its lord."

Mellenar sat on the steps before his home, lifting his face toward the sun. He sighed once and nodded. "Perhaps that is so, but I think Pelar will argue the point. What are his plans?"

"He has a bothra in his service," Lorin said quietly.

Mellenar glanced at his broadsword and nodded. "That is bad. I may have to leave this place to face it. I wouldn't want Asala or the children to see."

"You plan to light it?"

The lord nodded. "What else is there?"

Lorin sat down next to the lord and watched the children playing in the square. The sunlight felt hot and heavy above him. "You may be right. The only way out may be for you to die. How much do you know of the bothra?"

"They're loyal until their task is done, then the wizard has no hold on them. They will not stop until they've killed."

"So I've heard," Lorin said. "So I've heard."



The assassin watched from the darkness of the lord's receiving room. He knew the shadow creature would come, but from where? He hefted the useless dirk in his hand, watching a single drop of blood slip from the blade. How many times would he watch a similar scene in the future?

Movement from the far side of the room caught his eye. The bothra appeared near the lower edge of the open window, winding and flowing through the midday light, seeming to flee from the sun. In the full daylight it no longer resembled an animal. Now it was little more than a black cloud, the center of which seemed darker than the most starless night Lorin had ever seen.

The shadow creature rolled across the floor, shifting and pulsing, following an invisible trail to its source. Lorin waited until it reached the line of blood he'd allowed to flow across the floor. Then he stepped from the shadows, dragging his burden behind him.

The bothra stopped when it sensed his presence and that of the still, bloodied form he held. The creature seemed to regard Mellenar's body with a visible contempt, but the anxious writhing it had displayed earlier lessened as it drew near.

Lorin did not move as the blackness touched his feet and crawled up his legs to flow over the body of the Lord of Tanske. It seemed to absorb the blood that covered his body, growing fatter, a dark leech setting to feed. It remained only an instant, then flowed back to Lorin's form.

"Hear me, dark one," he said, plunging the bloodied knife into the black mass. "Here is the blood of the one you sought. I have done the task your master set for you. You have failed and must never be free."

The bothra shook with rage, sending an icy shudder through Lorin. He released Mellenar's body and allowed the creature to cover him entirely.

"Killing me will not free you," he shouted into the darkness smothering him. "I have taken your task from you. You serve Pelar no longer. To be free, you must now serve me."

The blackness receded instantly, flowing like mud in summer rain. Lorin watched it retreat to a corner of the room and laughed. "Pelar is not the only one who knows your ways," he said. "You've failed your mission and forfeited your freedom to me. Hear me, foul thing, and you may yet be free."

The bothra rolled forward again, almost laying itself at his feet. Lorin swallowed his disgust and continued. "You have but one purpose here, to kill. You may have your freedom if you do so. I command you to seek your former master. Kill Pelar and you are free."

The room turned to a sea of darkness as the monster sprang forward, stretching toward the window. Lorin watched it flow back in the direction it had come, then stepped toward the window.

"Pelar and Kagge must both die. Do not fail."

Lorin did not move from the window, not even when Mellenar's still-bloody form stirred and rose from the floor. The knight moved slowly toward him, favoring the arm where Lorin had cut a bloody gash with the dirk. He leaned against the sill and watched the cloud of darkness disappear on the horizon.

"I did not believe it would really work," The lord said, wiping the blood from his face. "I could feel the thing all around me. It made me want to choke."

"You would have done far worse if you had dared to breathe. Be thankful such creatures aren't as blessed with brains as they are with power."

"Do you think it really will kill Pelar?"

Lorin nodded and sheathed his dirk. "You spoke of how the freedom of this place was hard won. I think the creature will fight just as hard for its own freedom."

Mellenar clasped Lorin's shoulder, a gesture the young man was surprised to find he did not mind. "I owe you my life, Lorin of Bredith. I and my family will always welcome you as one of our own." He bound his wounded arm with a length of sash from the window curtain and regarded his guest with a knowing look. "You never did tell me why you came to Tanske. If there is anything I can help you with, anyone you wish to find."

Lorin shook his head and smiled at the Lord. "No need. I already found him."

Mellenar's eyes, as piercing as the wizard's had been, held a look of understanding. "And was your business successful?"

"As successful as it needed to be," Lorin said. He reached out and held Lord Mellenar's shoulder for a moment. "As I said before, a city needs its warrior to keep its peace. Tanske chose its leader well."

"Will you stay the night?" Mellenar asked.

Lorin shook his head and turned toward the window again. The midday sun was at its apex, shining full into the dwelling. Lorin closed his eyes, feeling the warmth on his face, then opened them to the brightness once more.

"No," he answered slowly, "I think not. Bredith awaits my return, and I have much to consider before I reach it."

Mellenar nodded. "Such as?"

"Such as what I am to be in the world," Lorin answered. He felt himself smile. "At least I know what I am not." He looked again toward the light beyond the window. "Besides, I have a desire to begin the journey in the daylight. Night will come soon enough, and there are a great many things I wish to see before the darkness falls."



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What is reality, and which dice do you roll to get there?

GAME'S END

Kevin J. Anderson
Roc 0-451-45031-0 \$4.50

It's "spoiler warning" time, as I can't explain my reaction to *Game's End* without discussing the books ending in detail. Kevin Anderson's Gamearth trilogy has been peculiar from the start, but its conclusion adds several whole new dimensions to the concept of overeager game-mastering.

Gamearth's "relative reality" has been at issue throughout the trilogy. Is Gamearth as "real" as the world of the fantasy gamers ("Outsiders") Scott, Tyrone, David, and Melanie? Late in *Game's End*, we get an answer: These two worlds are neighboring dimensions in an infinite series of game universes. The discovery costs one Gamearth character her existence and provides the trilogy's punch line when two meta-gamers roll dice in the final scene to decide whether a doomsday weapon fired from Gamearth will detonate in David's living room. "Punch line," though, is all too descriptive. The cosmology simply doesn't hold together, and it betrays the Outsiders as no more than authorial puppets.

This "infinite game" is unconvincing. It's an unwieldy variant of the old "parallel time tracks" concept, only now anything that anyone has ever imagined gets its own plane of existence. By extension, any ending to the trilogy would be as valid as any other, eliminating all emotional impact. Yet accepting the premise seems to invalidate parts of the trilogy itself, in which the intrusion of "reality" into Gamearth creates spectacular pyrotechnics. In the first book, David and Tyrone can't manifest fully on Gamearth because their "reality" would destroy everything around them; in the third, Tyrone is instant cannon fodder for a horde of Gamearth monsters. The interrelationship between the realities isn't worked out well enough to sustain the plot.

Even if the pseudo-physics made sense, the Outsiders fare unreasonably badly in *Game's End*. Right up till the end, they bicker and work at cross purposes as their own world begins to fall apart. Magic manifests, phones go dead, doors lock by themselves—but these supposedly intelligent young people don't even pause to plan strategy or reason their way out of impending disaster. Nor do they notice they're being manipulated, let alone whether their puppeteer hails from Gamearth, from the next reality up the scale, or from the other side of a three-book contract.

This would be just barely forgivable if a pending fourth volume allowed the former Outsiders to come to terms with their situation. But that doesn't appear to be in Anderson's Book of Rules, segments of which make up the rather flippant biographical sketch that opens *Game's End*. What Anderson has written is tantalizing, but it's spectacularly flawed, and gamers will have to keep waiting for the definitive RPG-fantasy crossover story.

BLACK TRILLIUM

Marion Zimmer Bradley, Julian May, and Andre Norton
Foundation 0-385-26185-3 \$18.95

Three words describe *Black Trillium*: implausible, inevitable, and remarkable. The collaboration is implausible, given that the three authors involved are widely separated by geography and circumstance. It was also inevitable in today's world of high-concept publishing: it's hard to imagine a more powerful drawing card than the creators of Darkover, the Witch World, and the Many-Colored Land. And it's remarkable because it works. The novel behind the drawing card plays to the strengths of all three writers in a wide-ranging, solidly crafted narrative with elements of high adventure, vivid magic, and remote science fiction.

Not surprisingly, the lead roles go to three independent-minded sister princesses; Norton, May, and Bradley are all noted for favoring strong heroines. While the novel can hardly be called a feminist tract, the major men's parts are generally less than compelling. One king is a wizard's tool, the other is a victim of events, and the puppet's son is likeable but no match for the youngest princess. Of the male leads, only the remote wizard Orogastus emerges as a truly multidimensional personality who might not deserve his black reputation.

The setting is both familiar and distinctive. Civilization is broadly medieval, but there are vast wildernesses, several intelligent nonhuman and semi-human races, and just enough well-concealed and disintegrating technology to tag the milieu as a long-lost human colony world. Most of the magic appears to be of psionic origin though some relies on hardware that's at best barely understood by its users.

Within these parameters, the story itself is a thoroughly traditional character-building quest adventure, in which each princess must come to terms with her destiny and powers. Of the three, one turns to magic, one to war, and one to statecraft and marriage, neatly covering all the bases. Only together can the sisters wield the tripartite magical device needed to "rebalance" the world and counter Orogastus' plans.

It may be both praise and condemnation to say that *Black Trillium* will certainly appeal to readers who enjoy the work of any one of its collaborators. While it clearly reflects skillful craftsmanship and technical proficiency, the very ease with which the writers' styles blend makes one wonder how distinctive they were in the first place. Make no mistake: *Black Trillium* is an entertaining, well-told tale, but it is no more than that, regardless of the eminence of its authors.

THE QUEEN'S HEAD

Edward Marston

Fawcett Crest 0-449-21791-4 \$3.95

You won't find this one in the fantasy section of your neighborhood bookstore. It may, in fact, be sufficiently obscure to have vanished from the mystery shelf between the time I write this and the time it sees print. And it's just dry enough (that's dry as in wine, not as in boring) that it may be an acquired taste. But chase down *The Queen's Head* anyway, because Edward Marston's tale of murder most theatrical in Elizabethan England is as sharp-eyed and useful a travel guide to its period as you're likely to find for the price—and a well-plotted mystery besides.

Its protagonist is Nicholas Bracewell, behind-the-scenes manager of a prominent acting company, and the time is the weeks just before and after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Nicholas is very nearly an ideal viewpoint character for the historical voyeur; left to his own devices, he inhabits the pubs, boardinghouses, and streets of the vast middle class, but when matters call for it he is entitled to walk and listen among the nobility whose wealth provides sponsorship for London's theatrical endeavors.

Marston's plot ranges widely on both levels. The unexpected murder of one of Bracewell's actors sends him investigating into taverns and alleys of dubious repute, while the company's leading actor recruits Nicholas as middleman in a prospective tryst with a gentle-born lady (under the nose of the actor's wife). Meanwhile, every theatrical company in London is scrambling to produce a play commemorating the British defeat of the Armada, dangerous pranks threaten one of the company's child actors, and Bracewell's mistress is becoming understandably concerned for his safety.

The narrative is lively and detailed, giving plenty of sensory information about scenes as well as advancing the action. There's more than enough background for gamers to construct and populate several city locales; it's not inconceivable that an entire campaign might be built around a theatrical troupe. Marston has a keen eye for personality as well as for place, and the small eddies and intrigues among the actors are eminently believable.

If there's a weak point, it's that Marston must slightly stretch credibility when he eventually connects most of his subplots into a larger conspiracy, a good portion of which is conducted offstage. But that's a minor matter in an otherwise engaging yarn, and the many virtues of *The Queen's Head* more than outweigh its few blemishes. Gamers willing to step across the bookstore to collect the novel should be more than pleased with what they find.

HORSELORDS

David Cook

TSR 0-88038-904-4 \$4.95

IRONHELM

Douglas Niles

TSR 0-88038-903-6 \$4.95

The cumulative effect is rather striking: the Forgotten Realms have gone multicultural with a vengeance. *Horselords* begins a trilogy with a strong Far Eastern flavor, while *Ironhelm* appears to be the first part of the Realms'-eye version of the Spanish conquest of Central and South America. But if the novels share a common theme—the introduction of new civilizations into the Realms—they differ both in emphasis and in execution, and there are some instructive observations to be made from the contrast.

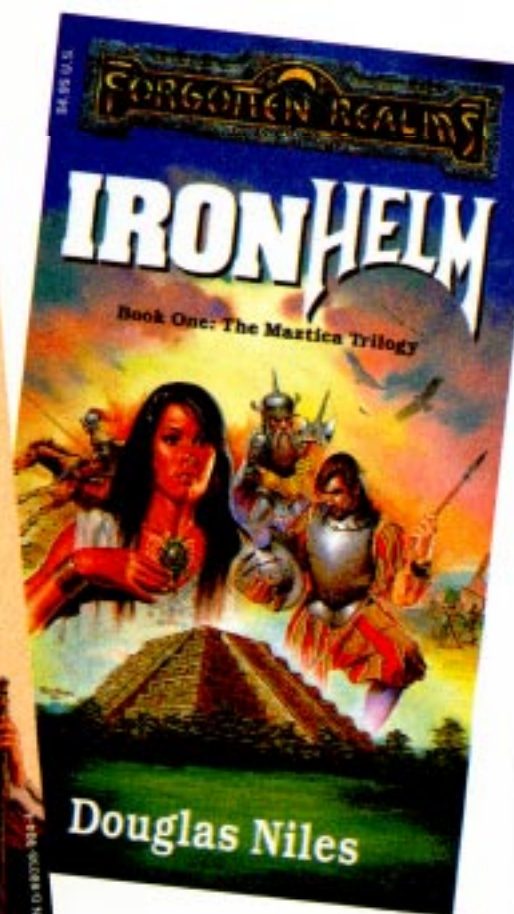
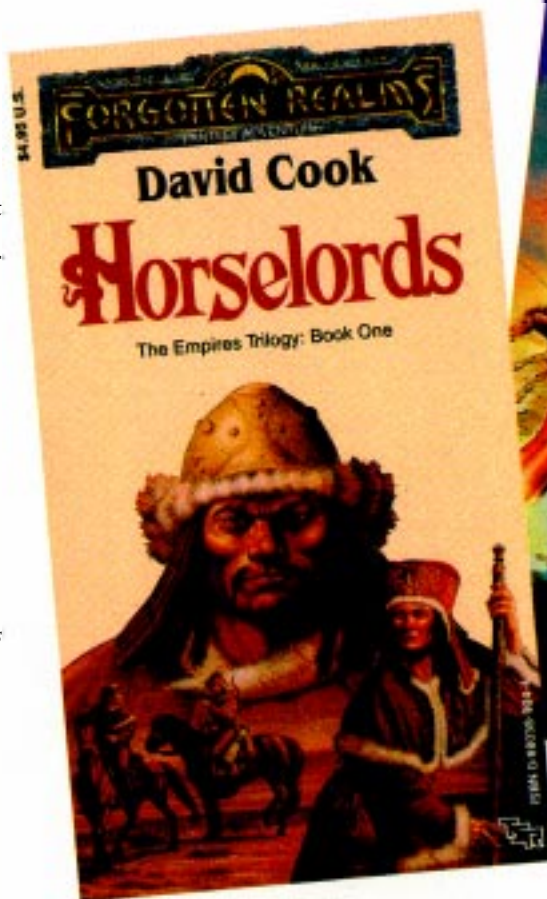
Horselords begins like an unexpected swimming lesson. David Cook plunges readers instantly into the heart of the Tuigan horde and keeps them there virtually throughout the novel. The reluctant historian Koja finds himself forced to adapt to the barbarians' unfamiliar lifestyle, but it isn't long before he's moving through the currents of Tuigan intrigue with a fair degree of confidence.

Meanwhile, a continent or two to the southwest, the events of *Ironhelm* are unfolding as if covered by an entire television network news division. Douglas Niles' narrative scatters hidden cameras all over the landscape: in the capitals of two rival Maztican empires; on the ships of an exploratory force of clerical warriors; under-

ground, in a hidden enclave of ancient plotters; and on the heels of a young Maztican woman who finds her life constantly redirected by destiny.

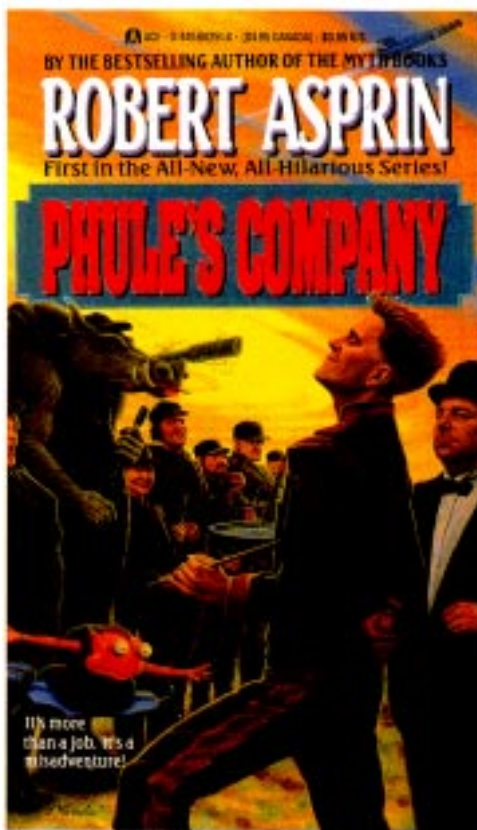
Unfortunately, Niles' news division lacks an anchorman, and *Ironhelm* therefore has a distinctly choppy quality. In addition to leading characters Erix and Halloran, at least half a dozen other supporting players serve as viewpoint observers at one point or another, and most of them gain individual subplots in the bargain. Besides the invasion from without, Maztica is threatened by internal political and magical intrigues—and covert forces of great good and great evil are rapidly becoming involved as well. There is simply too much going on for the novel to maintain a consistent focus.

The two books are about even in terms of historical and cultural lore. *Ironhelm* may have more real-world parallels, as Niles sets up the Realms' version of the Spanish conquistadors versus the natives, but *Horselords* probably has the edge in terms of pure, accessible cultural information. On the flip side, *Ironhelm* definitely offers more "AD&D® game flavor" than does *Horselords*, which could almost pass as a straight historical novel until near the end, when Cook sets up a highly charged magical finale.



Ironhelm's other distinction is that, to my knowledge, Niles establishes new ground for the fantasy-adventure genre. Most fantasy and SF with Central American overtones is more historical than imaginative; Niles takes the opposite road, which is refreshing. *Horselords* can't make that claim, and in fact there are some strong resonances between Cook's novel and *Imperial Lady*, an Andre Norton-Susan Schwartz collaboration (which is itself well worth reading) available from Tor Books.

The various pluses and minuses make it difficult to render an absolute judgment as to which novel is better. For pure craftsmanship, *Horselords* is easily superior, but *Ironhelm* gets higher marks for inventiveness. In this case, readers who prefer one book are just as "right" as those who prefer the other.



PHULE'S COMPANY

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Robert Asprin is well known to fantasy readers as chief architect of the Thieves' World universe and author of the popular, Myth Adventures series. His latest novel, though, turns to science fiction and a slightly different brand of humor—and the result begins a series that SF gamers should find valuable and entertaining.

Phule's Company is the sort of outfit that isn't officially supposed to exist in the Space Legion—a place where misfits and malcontents are assigned purely to get them out of the bureaucracy's hair. That includes its

leader, Captain Willard Phule, who is court-martialed into the slot after talking some of his colleagues into strafing a peace-treaty signing ceremony. (It wasn't his fault that no one told him the war was over.)

But Phule is no ordinary Space Legionnaire. He's also the heir to the galaxy's largest munitions empire and an absurdly wealthy man in his own right. So when the command of the Legion's least popular company is dropped in his lap with instructions to "turn things around," he takes the job perfectly seriously. And before long, his unconventional logic and vast resources have turned the dregs of the Space Legion into an unconventional but effective team of soldiers.

Though Asprin's stated intentions are humorous, the pace of *Phule's Company* is frequently almost leisurely rather than frenetic. That's both refreshing and inevitable, since a substantial portion of the book serves mostly to establish the company's characters and milieu. The humor is never far from view, though, and it's here that Asprin shows admirable versatility. Some of the comedy derives from the juxtaposition of Phule's spectacular wealth with the usually spartan customs of the military. Other comedy is character driven; there's the utterly silent Legionnaire who turns into a talking dynamo when put in charge of the company's radio net, the fearsome-looking alien who's a closet pacifist, and the company cook who specializes in stickfighting on the side. And another layer of amusement comes from the understated voice-over narration provided by Phule's personal butler and confidant, Beeker.

Fortunately, the novel isn't just a setup for the series to come. Not only is there an entertaining showdown between the underdog Legionnaires and the Regular Army's premier fighting unit, but Asprin works in a second climax involving what may or may not be an alien invasion of the backwater planet where Phule's company is currently guarding the swamps. Between these episodes and Phule's continuing efforts to cope with matters outside the company proper, there's more than enough plot to keep the story moving.

The premise, meanwhile, is a nearly perfect gaming vehicle. I'd lay odds on seeing a licensed game version of the Space Legion before long. The combination of swashbuckling, space opera, and general craziness is too good to pass up, and there's plenty of room in Asprin's universe for gamers to populate their own "Omega companies" of merry adventurers. *Phule's Company* is a cheerful, reliable adventure from a writer whose good reputation may get even better.

Recurring roles

This section is longer than usual this time because the stack of worthwhile reading from familiar sources is taller than ever, and there's more to say about them than usual. Without further ado:

It's been just six months since the last Mercedes Lackey update, but already there are two and a half new Lackey books out. Oddly enough, *Magic's Price* (DAW, \$4.50) is the weakest, bringing the Last Herald-Mage trilogy to a somewhat rushed and ambivalent conclusion. The problems may have been inevitable in part, since the ending sequence has been a given from the beginning, but a split in the viewpoint doesn't help matters either. Valdemar fans should be pleased but not overwhelmed, though the next book sounds promising.

Followers of Lackey's contemporary occult investigator, Diana Tregarde, will be well satisfied with *Children of the Night* (Tor, \$3.95), a prequel to last year's *Burning Water*. This time Diana is in New York coping with several sorts of vampires and coming to terms with her personal powers. While there are some rather overt philosophical borrowings from the Valdemar books, and Andre LeBrel is really too good to be true. Lackey's blend of intelligent characterization and solid psychological tension remains distinctive and satisfying. (Warning for completists: This novel expands and in some ways contradicts the short story "Nightside," previously published in *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*.)

Knight of Ghosts and Shadows (Baen, \$3.95) counts as only half a Mercedes Lackey book because it's a collaboration with newcomer Ellen Guon. But it also counts as a glittering success and a magnificent addition to the ranks of "urban faerie" novels. The blend of Hollywood wheeling and dealing, Renaissance faire folk music, and disintegrating elven society is seamless and intricately logical, with just the right proportions of high magic, cynical humor, and commercial intrusion (plus a couple of ingenious in-jokes for the very astute). Lackey and Guon have a real winner in this one, though the cover art is unfortunately underwhelming.

Another satisfying collaboration is the second StarBridge novel, *Silent Dances* (Ace, \$3.95), in which Kathleen O'Malley joins forces with A. C. Crispin to present a colorful and complex story involving two sets of avian aliens, mysterious merchant conspiracies, and a naturally deaf young woman whose "handicap" makes her the ideal liaison with the bird-people, whose ultrasonic cries are dangerous to normal ears. This is another rewarding adventure in the Andre Norton mold, and it goes a long way toward proving the versatility and potential of the StarBridge universe.

In the "and now for something completely different" department, the leading entry is *Wolfhelm* (Questar, \$4.95), Richard Knaak's third Dragonrealm novel. After two generally predictable books, Knaak goes off in a totally new direction, sending the semi-human war leader Gryphon off to another continent in search of his missing past. There are still factions and subplots packed together like piranhas in a sardine

can, but this time the mysteries are less derivative and therefore more mysterious. The book is still no more than light adventure, but now it's imaginative light adventure, which is a major improvement.

Ru Emerson's latest novel is both something old and something new: *Spell Bound* (Ace, \$3.95) is a left-handed, partly historical retelling of the Cinderella story. Emerson, as ever, is very good at creating atmosphere, and there are intriguing bits involving conflicting schools of magic, but the novel tries to go in too many directions at once and doesn't go far enough in any of them. Gamers interested in 17th-century Germanic society might give this a try, but it's really more a curiosity than anything else.

The Lost King (Bantam, \$4.95) might also be called a curiosity; it's Margaret Weis's first solo novel after a long series of collaborations with Tracy Hickman. It starts a series of far-future tales that seems to combine elements of classical philosophy and nuts-and-bolts space battle. It's a bit unsettling to find the divine right of kings being debated quite pragmatically in the bowels of a state-of-the-art spacegoing battleship, but Weis lays her groundwork carefully and gives her particular future some intriguing touches. This is a wait-and-see yarn; we won't know precisely


where Weis is going with her premise until she gets there. So far, though, it looks like an interesting trip.

That's not so much the case with *The Hawk's Gray Feather* (Roc, \$18.95), which begins a new trilogy in Patricia Kennealy's Keltiad cycle. This time she's transplanted the legends of Arthur, Merlin, and Taliesin into her spacefaring Keltic society, and done so with the same personable readability that marked her earlier works. Other critics have complained about the lack of overt high technology in Kennealy's novels given her premise, but in practice the setting seems less critical to this cycle than does her direct yet lyrical style. "Uncluttered by history" may be an apt description; at any rate, this is certainly one of the livelier Arthurian books to appear of late.


Last but not least come four books that simply build on what their predecessors have promised. *Dick Tracy: The Secret Files* (Tor, \$4.95), is an anthology in the same mold as previous collections highlighting Batman and the Joker. Co-editor Max Allan Collins also writes the Tracy comic strip, and gamers in the detective arena should find these stories thoroughly palatable. *Doctor's Orders* (Pocket, \$4.50) is Diane Duane's latest (and possibly last; reports differ) *Star Trek* novel, in which


Dr. McCoy is left in command when Kirk vanishes unexpectedly during a mission. As usual, Duane's characterization is precisely on target, and rarely has Klingon-baiting been this much fun. *Wyrd Sisters* (Roc, \$4.95) is the latest Discworld novel to reach American shores (we're about two books behind the British, I think), and it finds Terry Pratchett ringing his unique brand of change on Shakespearean drama and village witchcraft. Nobody else can do this sort of lunacy tempered by wisdom, which may be just as well. And finally, Alis Rasmussen concludes her Highroad sequence with *The Price of Ransom* (Bantam, \$3.95), in which there are more reverses and plot twists than some writers use in entire trilogies. Not all trilogies end as well as they start, but Rasmussen really has saved the best for last, and the Highroad novels are definite standouts in the interstellar pursuit category.

(The columnist now breathes a deep sigh of relief, having seen the surface of his desk for the first time in ages, and marks the next deadline on his calendar.) Ω




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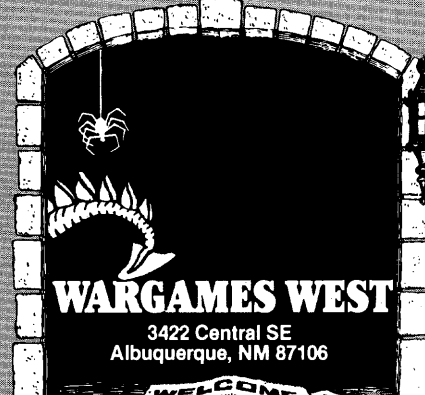
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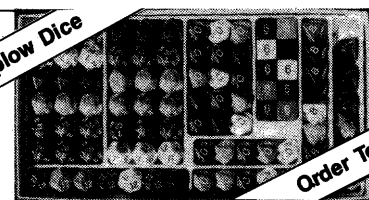


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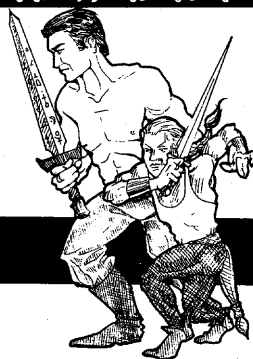
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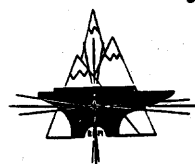
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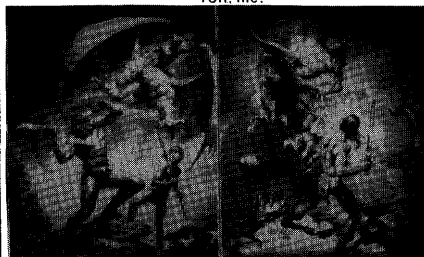
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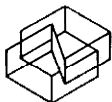
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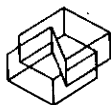
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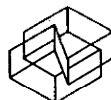
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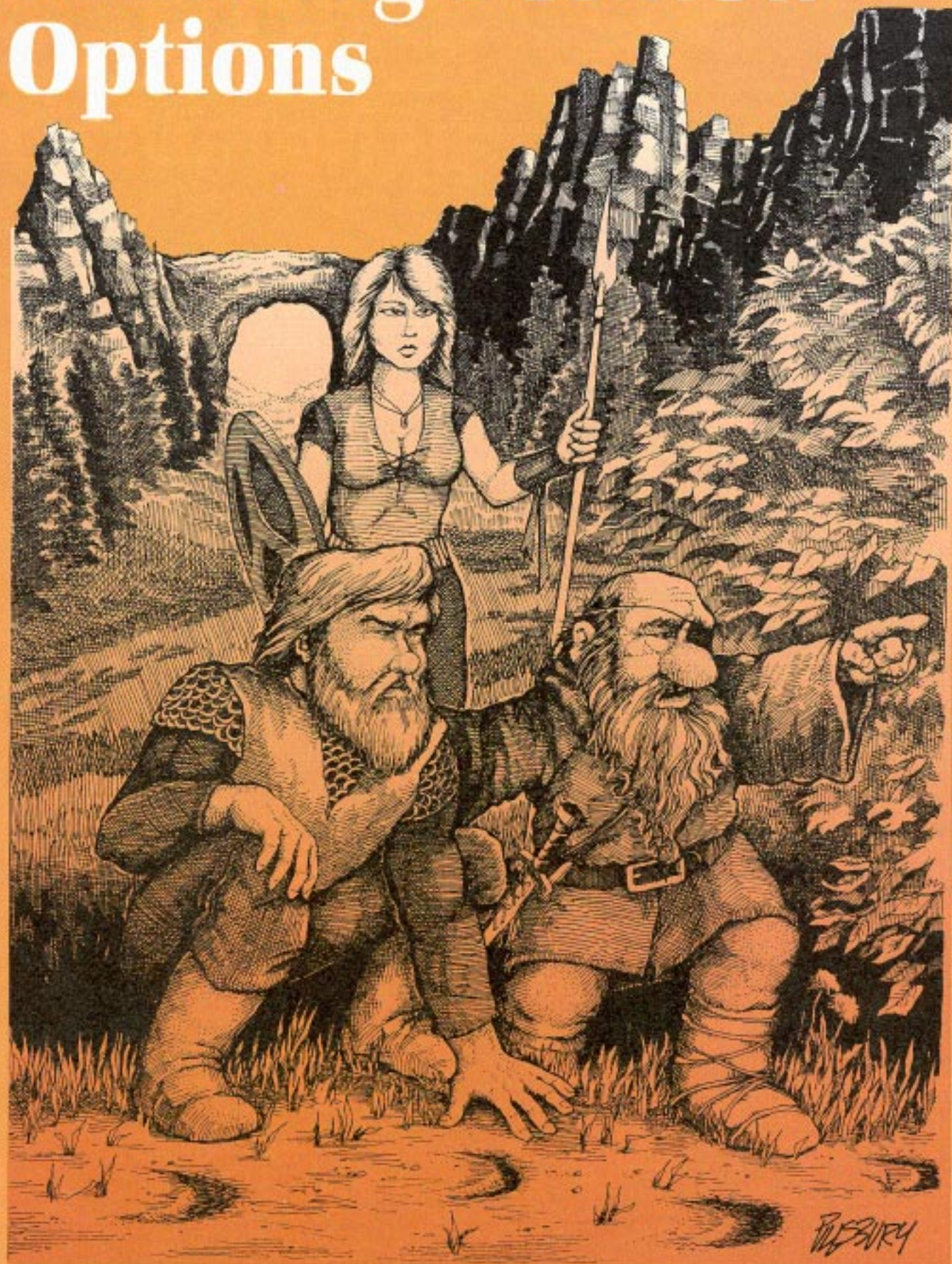
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Scouting For New Options



The scout—a “thief” without the thieving

by Kim Eastland

The scout class is presented for players and DMs who dislike using thieves or assassins in an AD&D® 1st Edition game campaign. It either takes the place of the thief class or stands on its own if the DM still allows thieves. Scouts are not a subclass of the thief class. Scouts use many of the abilities inherent to the original thief class while adding a few skills from other classes.

Scouts have been called “rangers of the dark” because their functions and abilities lend themselves to leading parties through underground caves, dungeons, and so on. Scouts tend to be quiet and intense, well knowing the amplifying effects of caverns and hallway echoes. They love to explore underground realms, though some have been known to operate briefly aboveground, usually in wilderness areas having canyons, mountains, and other rocky areas with climbable surfaces.

Parties prefer to travel with scouts as opposed to thieves or assassins whose ways are usually misunderstood (or are understood all too clearly). Good-aligned characters such as paladins, cavaliers, and clerics are wary of thieves and assassins, so the former usually employ scouts for their adventuring needs.

Scouts are often mistaken for thieves at first glance, as most of them wear the same type of armor and are of the same stature and build (often short, wiry, thin, and not very muscular but still in good shape). However, a character’s eyes usually give him away. Thieves have shifty eyes that examine other people and their purses and valuables. Scouts evaluate their surroundings, not people, always searching for deadfalls, traps, and places to which they can safely climb.

There are no scout guilds or scouting organizations. But a scout can usually be found near any civilized area, as most make their living from guiding adventurers or sightseers underground. The only people scouts abhor are assassins, a cowardly lot who often lurk in the dark waiting for the advance members of adventuring parties (which often are scouts).

Abilities and skills

A character must have at least a 9 dexterity to become a scout (a scout with a dexterity of 16 or better gains a 10% bonus to his experience points). A scout can be of any alignment, as all alignments make use of them. Any character race can be a scout, and there are no level limitations for any of the races. Use the same method to roll up scouts that you would use for any other character.

Scouts are not restricted in their use of poison, oil, or magical items (other than

restrictions defined by the magical item itself or those laid down in this article). They never use shields and may wear only leather, padded, studded leather, or elfin chain mail armor, opting for maximum maneuverability. Their weapon choices are limited only in that scouts cannot use weapons longer than 3½', nor can they use two-handed weapons such as polearms, pikes, staves, spears, battle axes, bastard swords, bows, crossbows, lassos, etc. Swords are preferred, and hand axes, daggers, and hammers are also used (doubling as tools). Scouts can use slings and hurled weapons such as javelins, throwing axes, daggers, and so forth. Scouts attack once per round and receive two initial weapons' proficiencies. Scouts gain one weapon proficiency every four levels. The weapons' nonproficiency penalty is -3 to hit.

Scouts use the to-hit and saving-throw tables for thieves, and have six-sided hit dice (as stealth is preferred over direct combat). Scouts advance in experience as thieves, as shown in Table 1; the only difference is that a scout gains 3 hp per level beyond the 10th, not 2 hp like a thief. Scouts do not pay for their training past 10th level.

Unlike a thief, a scout gains no bonuses for back stabbing, though he has normal bonuses for attacking from behind or with surprise. Scouts also cannot pick pockets or set traps, and stealing is neither their specialty nor purpose. They usually avoid doing anything that might allow someone to track them, leaving everything just as they found it (doing otherwise only in rare cases).

The scout's functions of opening locks, finding and removing traps, moving silently, hiding in shadows, hearing noise, and climbing walls are as per the thief abilities described on page 27 of the AD&D 1st Edition Player's Handbook, but their progression is slightly different and is given on Table 2 (with modifiers on Tables 3-5). Scouts also have functions similar to the thief-acrobat's tightrope walking and tumbling-falling, as described on pages 23-24 of *Unearthed Arcana*. The distance covered by the fall at any given level is listed in the Table 6. Scouts do not have a separate language like thieves' cant and have no extraordinary ability to read languages. Any scouts may gain the non-weapon proficiencies given in Table 7. They start with three nonweapon proficiencies, then gain one every four levels thereafter.

The scout class can be combined with any other class in a multiclassed or dual-classed roll except with an assassin, barbarian, cavalier, monk, paladin, or thief. A scout never takes on followers, henchmen, or hirelings, and he may build an abode

only within sight of a town (the source of his income).

Scouts have certain other special abilities, as follows:

Surprise: A scout's surprise function operates under the following conditions: If operating by himself, or 30' away from a party, or in a party composed entirely of scouts, a scout surprises foes on a 1-3 on 1d6, and is surprised on a 1 on 1d6, as per a ranger. If the PC is a ranger/scout mixed class, then he surprises opponents on a 1-3 on 1d6 if in unfamiliar terrain, or on a 1-4 on 1d6 if in familiar terrain. He is surprised on a 1-2 on 1d20 if in unfamiliar terrain, or on a 1 on 1d20 if in familiar terrain.

Underground tracking: When following opponents in an underground setting, a scout can track as well as a ranger of two levels higher (use the information on outdoor tracking in *Unearthed Arcana*, page 21). If the PC is a ranger/scout, he tracks underground as a ranger four levels higher than his highest class. A scout tracks outdoors at one-half his normal chance; a ranger/scout can track outdoors normally as allowed by his ranger level.

Back protection: At 4th level, a scout gains the back-protection ability of a barbarian (*Unearthed Arcana*, page 19). Back protection allows the scout to sense an attack from behind, as from a thief or assassin, and the back attack then loses all bonuses to hit and damage. Unlike the barbarian, however, the scout is not allowed to strike back if he has completed normal melee for that round. The scout gains a 20% chance to detect back attacks at 4th level, then gains 5% per level thereafter.

Detect secret doors: At 6th level, the scout can detect secret doors. The scout can detect concealed or secret doors by merely passing within 10' of them and rolling a 1 on a 1d8. If he is searching for such doors, he has a chance to find a secret door on a 1-2 on 1d8, and a concealed portal on a 1-3 on 1d8.

Detect illusions: At 8th level, the scout can detect illusions. He begins at 8th level with a 20% chance to determine that some sight, sound, or other sensory phenomenon is actually an illusion/phantasm spell. This ability gets better at a rate of 7% per level. This detection requires one round of concentration on the illusion. Regardless of level, the chance to detect such spells may never exceed 75%.

Scouts offer an option that has long been lacking for adventuring parties: a “thief” who won't pick your pocket. The scout offers excellent investigative abilities and survival skills useful to everyone. Even thieves might like to have a scout around to check the corridor ahead for monsters!

Table 1
Scout Experience Points and Levels

Experience	Experience	6-sided dice	Level title
0-1,250	1	1	Observer
1,251-2,500	2	2	Spotter
2,501-5,000	3	3	Point man
5,001-10,000	4	4	Outrider
10,001-20,000	5	5	Vanguard
20,001-42,500	6	6	Forerunner
42,501-70,000	7	7	Huntsman
70,001-110,000	8	8	SPY
110,001-160,000	9	9	scout
160,001-220,000	10	10	Master Scout
220,001-440,000	11	10+3	Master Scout
440,001-660,000	12	10+6	Master Scout

220,000 xp per level for each additional level beyond the 12th. Scouts gain 3 hp per level after the 10th.

Table 2
Scout Skills and Abilities

scout level	Open locks	FIR traps	Move silently	Hide in shadows	Hear noise	Climb walls	Rope walk	Tumble-fall	Back protec.	Detect illusion
1	25%	10%	15%	10%	10%	80%	50%	25%	-	-
2	29%	17%	21%	15%	10%	81%	55%	50%	-	-
3	33%	24%	27%	20%	15%	82%	60%	75%	-	-
4	37%	31%	33%	25%	15%	83%	65%	25%	20%	-
5	41%	38%	39%	31%	20%	84%	70%	50%	25%	-
6	45%	45%	45%	37%	20%	85%	75%	75%	30%	-
7	49%	52%	51%	43%	25%	86%	80%	25%	35%	-
8	53%	59%	57%	49%	25%	87%	85%	50%	40%	20%
9	57%	66%	63%	56%	30%	88%	90%	75%	45%	27%
10	61%	73%	69%	63%	30%	89%	95%	25%	50%	34%
11	65%	80%	75%	70%	35%	90%	100%	50%	55%	41%
12	69%	87%	81%	77%	35%	91%	100%	75%	60%	48%
13	73%	94%	87%	85%	40%	92%	100% ¹	25%	65%	55%
14	77%	99%	93%	93%	40%	93%	100% ¹	50%	70%	62%
15	81%	100%	99%	99%	45%	94%	100% ²	75%	75%	69%
16	85%	100%	99%	99%	45%	95%	100% ²	25%	80%	75%
17	89%	100%	99%	99%	50%	96%	100% ³	50%	85%	75%
18	93%	100%	99%	99%	55%	97%	100% ³	75%	90%	75%
19	97%	100%	99%	99%	60%	98%	100% ⁴	25%	95%	75%
20	100%	100%	99%	99%	65%	99%	100% ⁴	50%	100%	75%
21	100%	100%	99%	99%	70%	99%	100% ⁴	75%	100%	75%

1. This includes the ability to carry up to 1,000 gp of additional encumbrance with no wind present, or to carry a normal load in moderate wind with no penalty to the chance of success.
 2. This includes the ability to carry up to 2,000 gp of additional encumbrance with no wind present, to carry an additional 1,000 gp of encumbrance in a moderate wind, or to handle a strong wind while unencumbered.
 3. This includes the ability to carry up to 3,000 gp of additional encumbrance with no wind present, to carry an additional 2,000 gp of encumbrance in a moderate wind, or to carry an additional 1,000 gp of encumbrance in a strong wind.
 4. This includes the ability to carry up to 4,000 gp of additional encumbrance with no wind present, to carry an additional 3,000 gp of encumbrance in a moderate wind, or to carry an additional 2,000 gp of encumbrance in a strong wind.
- Wind conditions are mentioned on page 23 of the AD&D 1st Edition volume *Unearthed Arcana*.

Table 3
Racial Adjustments to Scout Abilities

Race	Open locks	F/R traps	Move silently	Hide in shadows	Climb walls	Rope walk	Tumble-fall	Back protec.
Dwarf	+ 10%	+ 15%	-	-	- 10%	- 5%	-	- 10%
Elf	- 5%	-	+5%	+ 10%	-	+ 10%	+5%	+5%
Gnome	+5%	+ 10%	+5%	+5%	- 15%	-	-	-
Half-elf	-	-	-	+5%	-	+5%	-	-
Halfling	+5%	+5%	+ 10%	+ 15%	- 15%	-	+5%	+ 10%
Half-orc	+5%	+5%	-	-	+5%	-	+ 10%	- 10%

Table 4
Dexterity Adjustments to Scout Abilities

Dexterity score	Open locks	FIR traps	Move silently	Hide in shadows	Rope walk	Tumble-fall	Back protec.
9	- 10%	- 10%	- 20%	- 10%	-	-	- 15%
10	- 5%	- 10%	- 15%	- 5%	-	-	- 10%
11	-	- 5%	- 10%	-	-	-	- 5%
12	-	-	- 5%	-	-	-	-
13-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	+5%	-	+5%	-	+5%	-	-
17	+10%	+5%	+ 10%	+5%	+ 10%	-	+5%
18	+ 15%	+ 10%	+ 15%	+ 10%	+ 15%	+5%	+ 10%
19	+ 20%	+ 15%	+ 20%	+ 15%	+ 20%	+ 10%	+ 15%

Table 5
Armor Adjustments to Scout Abilities

Armor worn	Open locks	FIR traps	Move silently	Hide in shadows	Climb walls	Rope walk	Tumble-fall	Back protec.
None *	-	-	+ 10%	+5%	+ 10%	+ 10%	-	+ 10%
Leather	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elfin chain	- 5%	- 5%	- 10%	- 10%	- 20%	- 10%	- 5%	-
Studded/padded	- 10%	- 10%	- 20%	- 20%	- 30%	- 20%	- 10	- 10

* This category applies when wearing *bracers of defense* or a cloak, but no large or bulky protective devices.

Dexterity bonuses always apply to scout abilities when wearing any scout armor. Any scout armor worn can be covered by another garment. Elfin chain mail can be worn under normal clothing, but studded leather and padded armor are stiff and can be covered by only a full body cloak.

Table 6
Scout's Tumbling-Falling Table

Scout level	Height fallen *
1-3	10'
4-6	20'
7-9	30'
10-13	40'
14-17	50'
18-21	60'

* At this height or less, the scout takes no damage from a fall if he first successfully rolls his tumble-fall chance given on Table 2 (with modifiers as appropriate from Tables 3 and 4).

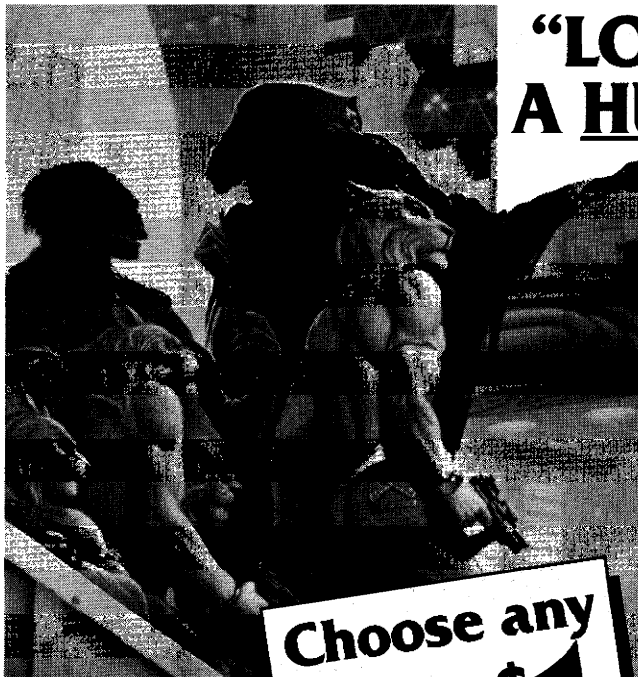
Table 7
Scout Nonweapon Proficiencies

Animal lore	Miner
Animal noise	Mountaineering*
Animal training	Riding
Blind-fighting*	Rope use*
Boating	Sound analysis*
Direction sense*	Stonemason
Endurance	Survival (cold)
Fire-building	Survival (heat)
Fishing	Swimming*
Fungus identification	



* The initial three nonweapon proficiencies must be chosen from one of these six. The animal-lore, survival (cold); and survival (heat) proficiencies are from the *Wilderness Survival Guide*; all others are from the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*.

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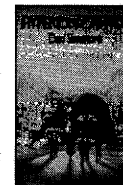
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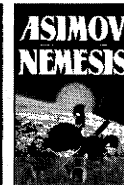
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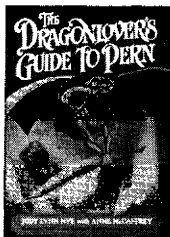
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FORUM



"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

For some time, we have been collecting letters from gamers concerning the attacks being made upon role-playing in general (and the D&D® and AD&D® games in particular) that charge such games with being harmful to gamers. These letters address the specific prejudices that gamers encounter and suggest ways to overcome that prejudice. We welcome further letters from our readers on this topic.

People who say that evil PCs aren't disruptive don't know what they're talking about. There used to be three gaming groups at our school: my own, a friend's, and one consisting of evil PCs. The DM of the evil PC group is rumored to be a satanist. I don't know if it's true, but it would seem to fit him. He could be best described as a troublemaker, the kind of guy who makes the teacher's life difficult. Most people don't like him, but he has attracted a small group that revolves around him. They play often, always using evil characters.

The school staff was basically out to get this DM. He had participated in such stunts as stealing phosphorous from the school lab and insulting a visiting priest. The staff was desperate to find some way to punish this DM. If the staff gave him lines or detention, he ignored them. If they suspended him, he stayed home, keeping his entire group with him. As a last resort, the staff banned D&D games at our school.

I remember when the vice principal came to me and my friend and explained that role-playing games were now banned in our school. We both protested, but to no avail. Playing D&D games was against the rules.

The sad thing is that this rule didn't really affect the person it was meant to punish. The evil-PC DM just played at home. The people it really affected were those in my group and my friend's group. I now play with only two players, sometimes three. Most of my friends simply live too far away to play often.

I don't even really mind playing RPGs in a sort of evil way if it's done right. I myself sometimes play [West End Games'] PARANOIA® game. But these guys [in the evil-PC group] were running around killing each other's characters and assassinating the king. That kind of stuff just gets a beginning player upset. So why do they do it? It seems pointless to me.

That DM I was talking about graduates this year. I just hope D&D games are allowed back into our school.

Tony Pace
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

If you haven't heard any attacks on fantasy role-playing games lately, you just haven't been listening in the right places. Several "snake-oil peddler" groups are traveling across rural and

small town America, holding "seminars on satanism" for local police departments and the general public. Our games are called satanist recruiting devices, and coyote scavengings are described as occult ceremonies. The TV "evangelists" are still attacking games when they aren't engaged in off-air immorality that gets them more headlines. The attack has even crossed the Atlantic with the recent involvement of the Cambridgeshire county council.

Yet in this country gamer defense has been disjointed, occasional, and almost totally ineffective. While several people have tried to counter these charges, they have been working almost on their own, with no way to exchange information with others working on the problem, and they generally are denied media access.

For instance, how many are aware that Dr. James A. Mercy, head of the intentional injuries team at the Centers for Disease Control and probably the top authority on suicide in the nation, has stated that he knows of no evidence linking game playing with suicide? How many have checked the claim of the head of one of the top antigame organizations that he is a member of the faculty of a major medical school? I did and was told that at one time they gave an honorary appointment to the clinical faculty to any local doctor requesting it, but when the current school head took the job, the custom was abolished and the doctor in question had no classroom duties. Using honorary credentials is like doing surgery with an honorary medical degree.

I have these documents because I am currently writing a book on the subject. My main emphasis is on the theological angle (I am an ordained United Methodist minister) and the lack of media access for gamers. I particularly need a copy of *Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons's Law Enforcement Primer on Fantasy Role-Playing Games*; answers to specific questions about the unsuccessful suit by B.A.D.D.'s founder against the Hanover County (VA) school system on September 17, 1984; and any accounts of how these games have helped players. A game-playing law-enforcement officer could get the free (to police only) *Primer*, a player with access to the Hanover County courthouse could check the court record, and many players have accounts of how games have helped them improve math grades, deal with introversion, etc. The only problem is, how does anyone know these resources exist or that someone needs information that you have?

We don't need an organization. Organizations have a tendency to become more concerned with their own power than in the cause for which they were originally organized. What we do need is an informal network of those conducting serious research into this problem. All researchers I know of have their own special fields of expertise and emphasis, as properly they should have. This is an advantage and should not be repressed by "reports by committee" from a static organization. Still, there is hardly a need for each one to write to the same source to get the same information when it can be circulated among the network.

Since our side is based on the truth, we have no need for secretly distributed material like the *Primer*. By insisting on at least three independent sources of information, we can avoid the danger of agents provocateurs or of just plain

honest error. I am willing to serve as a clearing-house in the initial stages, but ultimately each of us can put newcomers in touch with the pertinent sources and even that small degree of organization will no longer be needed.

Any who are interested can send me full particulars with an SASE, and in a couple of months I will let you know what turns up.

Paul Cardwell, Jr.
111 E. 5th Street
Bonham TX 75418

I recently read something interesting I thought you might like to be aware of next time one of you appears on *Donahue* or something, arguing about the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game vs. teen suicide and whatnot. It is often cited that a certain ardent player of D&D games has committed suicide, and it is suspected that the game had something to do with the young man's death. I'm sure you understand what I'm talking about.

Anyway, I recently read a popular-reading mathematics book, *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences*. On page 126, the author discusses this issue from a purely statistical standpoint. He writes about an article he read that stated that 28 teenagers who played the game had killed themselves. I have read similar articles, and I'm sure you know of many more.

The statistics always seem unsettling until you realize, as the author (John Allen Paulos) points out, that three million copies of the game have been sold; furthermore, the annual suicide rate of teenagers is 12 per 100,000. Given that three million game sets were sold, and following the average suicide rate of 12 per 100,000, you would expect 360 D&D game players to have committed suicide (12 X 30).

You could thus create an argument that playing D&D games *lowers* the suicide rate — I doubt those advocating banning D&D games would agree, but it's worth a shot.

You might want to pop into a library to check out the book yourself; it's useful in learning how to see through certain fallacious arguments you're often faced with.

Robert W. Heym
New Orleans LA

I have been playing role-playing games for the last 10 or 12 years, and that is why I am writing this letter. For the last few years we have seen [religious] fundamentalism grow. I have nothing against fundamentalism and have several friends who are fundamentalists, but I am opposed to the school of thought that regards role-playing games as satanic. I do not wish to see role-playing games banned; I don't think any of us do. That is why I am suggesting that we get organized.

Right now there is no organization that I know of that represents gamers as a whole. As far as I know there is no organization that is opposing all of the things that the fundamentalists are saying about role-playing games. Part of this is probably due to lack of interest or because people don't know what to do. There's also the fact that many gamers are below voting age and thus cannot legally do anything. I am asking for you to help me change this.

Many of you will think that I am overreacting. I don't believe that I am. . . . Almost two years

ago, a friend and I joined a fundamentalist church; we were both “born again.” I left the church when they began slamming role-playing games, but only because I had been playing role-playing games since the fourth grade. My friend was not as fortunate. Shortly before we joined this church, he had inherited all of the D&D modules from his older brother. At the church’s prodding, he burned them, *all* of them.

We need to get organized today; tomorrow may be too late. I don’t endorse violence, I endorse education. We have to show people that we are not a threat, that we are not a bunch of suicidal/satanic maniacs. We’re different, yes, and we should be damn proud that we’re different. I’m not saying that we should become part of the mainstream, but I think that we’d better get organized somehow or the mainstream may drown us.

Michael Shigetani
Tacoma WA

I’d like to thank Bryan A. Walker for his comments in DRAGON issue #145. I’m sure many more people are interested in the future of role-playing games rather than such topics as how many spells a 1st-level mage gets or what harpy babies look like. Many of us are concerned about the fate of our favorite pastime, the RPG. I can’t begin to count the number of articles and stories I’ve heard on TV or read in magazines and newspapers in which the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is blamed for murders, suicides, and satanism. Groups such as BADD (Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons) point the finger at RPGs for everything that goes wrong with kids today. They say such things as murder, rape, and satanic rituals are used and encouraged in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. I can’t believe it.

I’ve been playing RPGs since I was 11. That’s a young age to start, but in the five years I’ve played I haven’t seen anything to give D&D games a bad reputation. A D&D game is more like a fairy tale than some evil satanic toy. Knights in shining armor kill evil dragons and pious clerics banish evil priests. Maybe something could be said if we played the parts of the dragon and the evil priest, but we don’t. Role-playing games are usually for good-oriented characters. The AD&D 2nd Edition game didn’t get rid of the assassin class for nothing.

I have to say that I’ve never seen anything bad come of playing D&D games. I play just about every weekend and holiday, not to mention just about every day during the summer. I also listen to heavy metal music and enjoy going to heavy metal concerts and clubs. Most of the people I associate with have played RPGs at one time or another, and usually I have taught these people to play. I have a superficial interest in the occult, and I spend quite a bit of time reading fantasy novels. According to some people, these signs would mean I’m a satanic freak. Yet I was born a Catholic, I am still a Catholic, I attend church every Sunday, and I don’t smoke or do drugs.

Lenny Valure
Port Chester NY

Often I have seen letters proving that D&D games are not linked to satanism or the ideas associated with it. But what good does it do to show D&D game players what their game is really about when they already know? I’m sure all of you reading this know that RPGs, including the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, aren’t about Satan worship. I know this and so do my friends. Most of the people who have written in about this subject have good points to make in defense of RPGs. Again, what good does this do?

I can list several points in favor of role-playing. A psychologist (from Hawaii I think) wrote that he used D&D games to help his patients. Many letters have been written about how role-playing has helped the writers’ handicapped friends. And Douglas J. Hutchinson points out in issue #146 that RPGs help develop linguistic and social skills. I have a point of my own. In high school I was required to take a Greek mythology class. In that class, we discussed half the creatures in the *Monster Manual*, creatures that were a very much a part of the Greeks’ mythology. The “cult threat” (that is blown very much out of proportion anyway) must be much worse than estimated if our schools are teaching our children about satanic creatures. Also, many people opposed to RPGs have a difficult time showing how TSR’s TOP SECRET® game and other nonfantasy RPGs are satanic like their more “hellish” fantasy counterparts. But what good does it do to tell you?

Here is my suggestion: Why not attempt to get an article showing what role-playing is really about in a major magazine, such as *Time*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, etc.? I know there are many free-lance writers who read DRAGON Magazine, and I ask those of you to consider writing such an article.

Why should such a thing be done? It would show many people what these games are about, people who have heard only the opposed side in this debate. I knew many people who used to play D&D games but weren’t allowed to continue playing because their parents were told [that gaming] was satanic and caused its players to commit suicide. Maybe [a pro-gaming] article would show parents the truth. I cannot be sure about anyone else, but I have found a lot in role-playing, and I want to share it with people, show them all the fun in it.

And finally a few words for Mr. Shawn DeMers (in issue #132, thanks to Mr. Michael Drake for mentioning it). Tell your friends of the thousands of “satanists” who have made the books of the DRAGONLANCE® saga best sellers. People will assume almost anything. Many people do not realize that [Salman Rushdie’s] *Satanic Verses* is a novel and not a satanic bible.

Please consider my suggestion.

Dayle Johnson
Dickinson MD

Congratulations on the editorial in DRAGON issue #151. I couldn’t agree more. TSR and D&D games make good targets because they’re successful. Someone once advised that if a person wanted to ensure his own fame, he should assassinate someone famous—then, whenever the [dead person’s] name is mentioned, his would be, too. (I’ve forgotten who gave the advice. A 19th century anarchist, I think.) Anyone with a bent toward controversy who wants to make a name for himself can do no better than to select someone like [TSR] to attack. Justification? Who worries about that?

Your point on being “a little careless about the way in which you select and edit your data” is excellent. I would only chide you on being too nice about it. You know as well as I do that most of the people we’re talking about are very deliberate about how they select and edit their data. No accidents are involved. They (let them remain mercifully unnamed) decide what they want to prove, then accumulate the facts that will make their point. But I suppose you couldn’t actually say that in print.

Remember the story of Balder from Nordic mythology? If only one creature in all the world said “no,” he could not be brought back to life. The gods searched all the earth—and, yes, they

found one creature who said “no.” If we never do any new creative work until we’re certain that no one in the world could possibly be hurt or offended by it, we’ll soon find ourselves in the position of never doing anything new at all—because there’s always going to be *someone* who’s put at risk . . . or who claims to be.

If the people who want to create a “risk free” world ever win, we’re all doomed. So the best we can do is just to keep on keeping on, doing what we know is right and not let the carping bother us. That, I’m delighted to see, you already know. Well done!

Craig H. Barrett
Canon City CO

I am writing to tell you how angry I am about the misconceptions so many people have about role-playing games, and the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game in particular. More and more I hear people say they don’t want to play D&D games because they will commit suicide or something like that. If those people would play a role-playing game, they probably wouldn’t think the way they do.

I have been playing D&D games for about eight years, and I know people who have been playing for longer than that. Nobody I have ever known has done anything bad because of the game. I even understand that there is a group in the next town that plays for two or three days at a time and none of them have ever done anything bad because of the game. I think that a person who flips “because of the game” had something wrong with his head already.

Jason Aljets
Harvey ND

I have been enjoying your magazine since issue #109. All of the articles and artwork make your magazine great, but I have a problem. When trying to get new members into my gaming group, parents seem to protest. They believe that the D&D game is satanic and will cause their children to go out and kill people. This fear has been blown out of proportion by programs such as *20/20* and *60 Minutes*. This keeps my friends from playing. Please, if possible, send me some information or articles on good aspects of role-playing. Thank you for anything that you can send me. And please keep up the great work in DRAGON Magazine.

C. P. Bates
Chester SC

The controversy goes on and on: Is the D&D game hazardous to our children? As the mother of an about-to-be sixteen-year-old enthusiast, I would like to go on record on the game’s behalf.

Three years ago, my son (then twelve) bought the Basic set. He is an only child, so I began to play with him. Together we entered a world of incredible wonder and excitement. Our only problem was that we had trouble finding others to share it with. (That, of course, is the fly in every serious DM’s ointment and has nothing to do with this letter.) Eventually, we found two more players. It was with a great deal of sorrow that we were forced to disband our little group recently when one of the members moved out of town. But hope is within reach: We have recently received the backing of our local library. So a new campaign lies ahead.

If there is any danger in the role-playing genre, it is that it is addictive. Handled properly, it is blessed relief from boredom and stress, and it is definitely preferable to an afternoon of Jason, Freddy, heroin, and cocaine. One need only use some sense.

On the positive side, the situations presented

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in the game often allow young adults to sample life hazards and learn to deal with them intelligently. All of us make judgment errors in our youth. D&D and AD&D games allow those judgments to be made safely. When several players are involved, it teaches valuable lessons in teamwork. But most of all, it is fun.

My son has grown to young manhood, and I have become perhaps a better parent because of these games. I feel genuinely sorry for those parents who have so near at hand the means to bridge the gap between themselves and their children, yet fail to use it.

Geri Balyard
Canton OH

This is the first letter that I have submitted to you. I hope it is published. I have been playing role-playing games for over six years now, and am nineteen years of age. I play AD&D, FASA's BATTLETECH®, and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ games mostly, but have played almost every role-playing system out. I also am a Christian and go to church. The above information is necessary to understand the comments and statements that I am about to make.

I have come under attack from Christians in my church and others at my public school about my interest in AD&D games and other role-playing games in general. I have listened to their comments. They range from "Oh, no! You play *that* game? Why, you're a Satan worshiper!" to "What good are role-playing games anyway?" Well, frankly, I'm fed up with it!

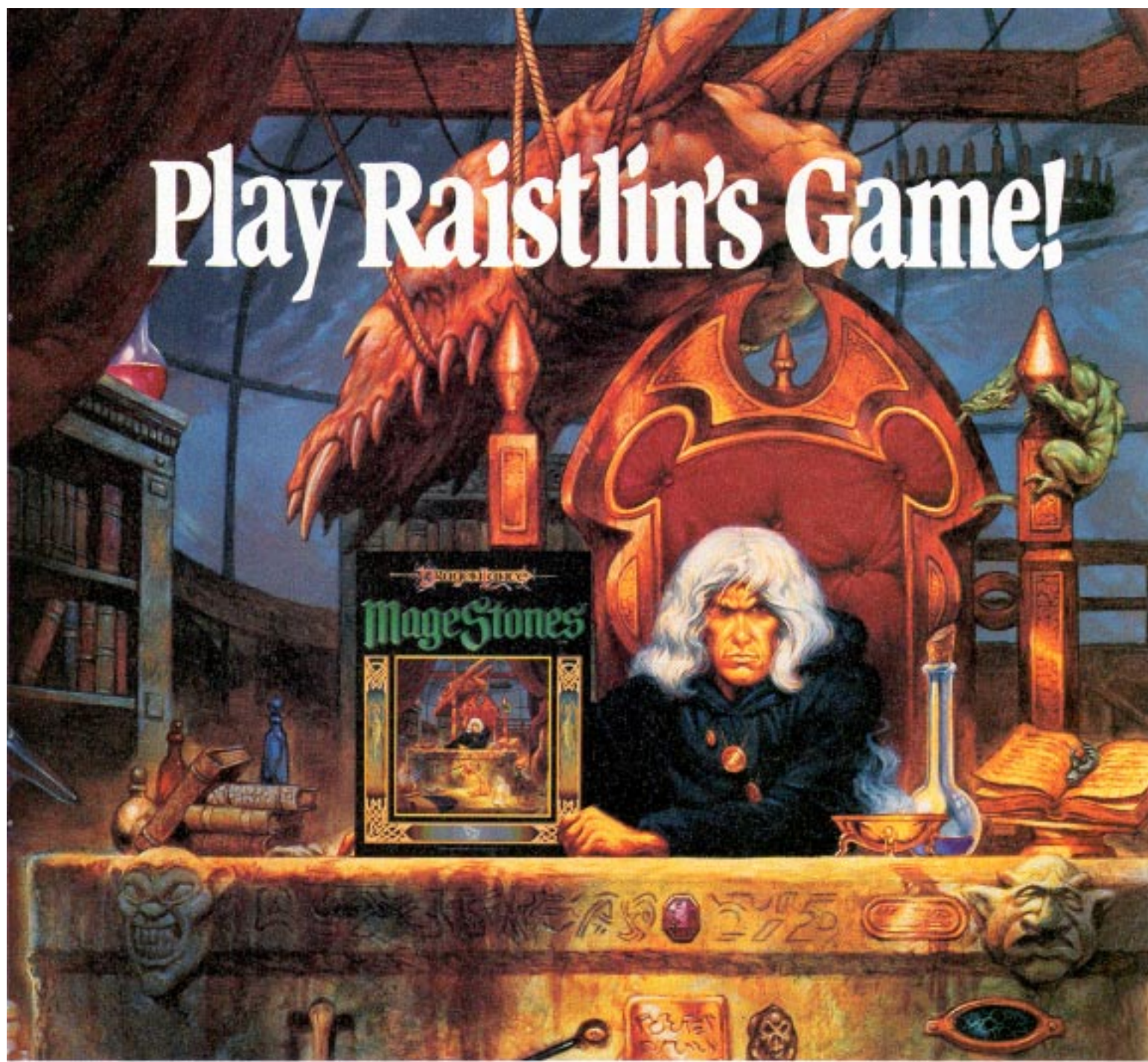
First of all, just because someone plays a game that involves make-believe creatures such as spirits or ghouls doesn't make one a Satan worshiper. I consider myself to be a good Christian in general and think that the accusation is totally biased. Many Christians tend to shut out anything that has even a hint of "evil" in it. They never examine something, scrutinize it, try to find good in something. As a church-goer, I am told always to find the good in everything and to try and look at both sides of an issue, to not be biased, but this is what's happening to AD&D games in the church community.

Second: "What good are they?" The AD&D game and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game (the latter in particular) teach good morals such as mercy, bravery, intelligence, and teamwork. What is wrong with that? In AD&D games, a character of lawful-good alignment, such as a cavalier, would set a good example as an honest and brave person. There is more to AD&D games than dice, books, and killing weird-looking monsters. There's character interaction and the main plot of the quest, in which players must act good; that makes a good game. I think the church people have passed over those facts.

In closing, I'd like to say that it's the DM who sets the tone of the game. As DM, I usually take out "questionable" material such as demon lords, false gods, etc. It's the DM's campaign that should be questioned, not the AD&D game itself. The responsibility lies there. And to all who read this, always find the good in things, look at both viewpoints of everything, and don't shut your minds to new things. After all, was not Jesus himself killed because of his viewpoints?

Dan Pryor
Phillipsville CA

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. **No** call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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CONTEMPLATION '90, September 14-16

This year's convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Jefferson City, Mo. Guests of honor include Octavia Butler, Rick Lowry, Richard Cross, and Tom Seymour. Activities include hours of unbridled gaming, video rooms, a computer room, an art show and auction, a masquerade and dance featuring Dell Harris (guest artist and DJ), a hucksters' room, panels galore, and a hospitality room. Registration: \$15. Write to: CONTEMPLATION, P.O. Box 7242, Columbia MO 65215. For hotel reservations, call: (314) 635-7171, and mention the convention!

ISOCON 4, September 14-16

Organized by Io and S4, this SF convention will be held at the Glasgow University Union in Glasgow, Scotland. Shortly after booking this site, the organizers discovered that it was fitted with an interstellar drive. The programming will revolve around the starship's journeys through space and time, with many stops along the way. Registration: £10 attending; £6 supporting. Accommodations, food, drink, and dealers' tables are available. Write to: ISOCON 4, c/o Glasgow University Union, 32 University Ave., Glasgow, UNITED KINGDOM G12 8LX.

TACTICON '90, September 14-16

The Denver Games Assoc. presents this convention at the Sheraton Hotel of Lakewood. Also participating are the Colorado Springs Gaming Society, and S.A.I.G.E. Events include gaming of all kinds, official RPGA™ tournaments, miniatures events, auctions, and a figure-painting contest. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Denver Gamers Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 680-7824.

EARTH '90, September 15-16

The 1. Hemmingen Simulations Spieler Verein von 1986 e.V. will host this RPG event in Hanover, West Germany. Activities will include RPGs, board games, miniatures, a costume contest, demos, and workshops. Registration: 10 DM/day or 18 DM/weekend. Write to: I.H.S.V. v.1986 e.V., Berliner Str. 23, 3005 Hemmingen 1, WEST GERMANY.

A SAUCER FULL OF SECRETS '90 September 15

Freeform Unlimited presents one of the only freeform conventions in the U.S., at the Portage Howard Johnson in northwest Indiana. You can be an actor, playing your favorite character in a real-life situation! The rooms of the hotel will become the rooms of the Prometheus Space Station, you will become your character, and you will participate in the Intergalactic Peace Talks. Enjoy this innovative form of live-action role-playing from Australia. Prizes for the best costume and best role-playing will be awarded.

Registration: \$10 pre-registered; \$20 at the door. Write to: Dave Machin, 719 Juniper Rd., Valparaiso IN 46383; or call: (219) 759-2530.

COLONIAL CITY GAMEFEST '90 September 15-16

CCG '90 will be held (again) at the Knox County Memorial Building in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Tournaments and events include AD&D®, GLADIATORS*, WARHAMMER FANTASY* and 40,000*, and other miniatures, board, and role-playing games, as well as a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5 for the weekend pre-registered; \$3/day at the door. Write to: CCG '90, c/o Mount Vernon Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 1184, Mount Vernon OH 43050.

CALGARY GAMING CONVENTION '90 September 21-23

This third annual convention will be held in Calgary, Alberta. Events will include WORLD IN FLAMES*, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER*, SUPREMACY*, CIVILIZATION*, KREMLIN*, SHOGUN*, FORTRESS AMERICA*, TALISMAN*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, CAR WARS*, SYSTEM 7*, BATTLETECH*, and CIRCUS MAXIMUS* games, and a game auction. Registration: \$9 Canadian; plus a small event fee. Write to: CWG-Convention '90, 207 Bernard Drive NW, Calgary AB, CANADA T3K 2B6.

LEHICON III, September 21-23

The Lehigh Valley Gamers Assoc. is sponsoring this convention at the Easton Sheraton Inn in Easton, Pa. Events include AD&D® 1st and 2nd Ed. games, RPGA™ AD&D® Open and Members Only tournaments, and CAR WARS*, BATTLETECH*, ROLEMASTER*, and HARPOON* games. Door prizes and a dealers' room round out the weekend's activities. Registration: \$10/day or \$15/weekend in advance, with at-the-door rates slightly higher. Ask about special hotel room rates and under-17 discounts by calling the Sheraton at (215) 253-9131. Write to: LEHICON III, c/o Lehigh Valley Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 1864, Bethlehem PA 18016-1864.

AUTUMN CAMPAIGNS '90, September 22-23

This gaming convention will be held at the Dominion Inn & Conference Center in Lexington, Ky. Events include RPGs, board games, fantasy and historical war games, and tournaments for AD&D® and BATTLETECH* games. Other activities include a miniatures painting contest, a costume contest, a used-game auction, and a dealers' room. Door prizes will also be awarded. Registration: \$6/day or \$10/weekend. Write to: The Rusty Scabbard, Inc., 188 Woodland Ave., Lexington KY 40502; or call: (606) 255-3514.

BORDER WARS II, September 28-30

Sponsored by the Heart of America Historical Miniature Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Sports Complex Holiday Inn in Kansas City, Mo. Activities include historical miniatures gaming, plus board and role-playing games. Registration: \$10 before Sept. 15; \$15 thereafter. There is a \$2 discount to members of the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society. Write to: HAHMGS, c/o Borderland Game & Hobby, 2550 W. 47 St., Kansas City KS 66103; or call: (913) 384-2519.

CONTACT 8, September 28-30

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Evansville, Ind. Guests include Gary Robe

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
- ⊙ indicates a European convention.

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and Dr. Bill Breuer. Activities include seminars, a 24-hour video channel, and a hucksters' room. Registration: \$20. Write to: CONTACT 8, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737; or call: (812) 428-0549 before 10 P.M. CDT.

GEORGIA FANTASY CON '90

September 28-30

This celebration of fantasy and horror will be held at the OMNI International Hotel and Convention Center, Atlanta, Ga. The guest of honor is Michael Moorcock. Events include four tracks of panels and workshops, a masquerade, an art show and print shop, video rooms, art, and consignment auctions. Write to: GEORGIA FANTASY CON, Box 148, Clarkston GA 30021.

NOVACON VI, September 28-30

This gaming convention will be held at Texas A&M University's Memorial Student Center. Events include RPGs, board games, demos, a dealers' room, movies, and Japanimation. Registration: \$4 at the door. Write to: NOVACON VI, c/o MSC NOVA, Box J-1, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77841; or call: (409) 845-1515.

SATELLITE I, September 28-30

This SF convention will be held at the Hotel Bentley in Alexandria, La. Guests include Richard Chaves, Barry Morse, and Robert Asprin. Gaming events are being planned. This is also the official *Space: 1999* International convention, and the Alliance has given this convention its full support. Write to: SATELLITE I, P.O. Box 13135, Alexandria LA 71315.

WHITEWATER SF/FANTASY FESTIVAL I

September 28-29

Whitewater's first gaming convention will be held in the new Campus Activities Center at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Events include: an AD&D® tournament; BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, PALLADIUM®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, MEGATRAVELLER®, AXIS & ALIENS®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, V&V®, and ASL® games; open gaming; a dealers' room; and a movie room. Registration: \$5/day at the door. Judges and dealers are welcome! Write to: Whitewater Gaming Assoc., c/o Robert Wadsworth, 523-B South Gault St., Whitewater WI 53190; or call: (414) 473-2192.

SKELETORN '90

September 29-October 1

The Engadine and Heathcote Gaming Group is again hosting this convention on the grounds of Oatley Public School in Oatley, Sydney, Australia. Events include AD&D® 1st and 2nd Ed., BATTLETECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CTHULHU NOW®, and CYBERPUNK® games. Prizes will be awarded, and demos will also be presented. Registration: \$11 (Australian) plus \$4 to \$6 per event. Write to: SKELETORN '90, c/o 79 Thurlgona Rd., Engadine NSW 2233, AUSTRALIA; or call Paul at: (02) 979-9993.

COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 16

October 5-7

Hosted by the Schenectady Wargamers Assoc., this convention will be held at the Albany Thruway House and Convention Center in Albany, N.Y. Guests include Jean Rabe, the RPGA™ Network Coordinator. Events include over 100 AD&D® events (including RPGA™ Grand Masters and Masters), with BATTLETECH®, 1830®, DIPLOMACY®, and miniatures games, and an RPGA™ Network breakfast, an auction, a miniatures-painting contest, a costume contest, and the Gamers' Olympics. Registration: \$12 for the weekend preregistered; \$18 at the door.

Write to: Schenectady Wargamers' Assoc., Attn: Role-playing Director, P.O. Box 9429, Schenectady NY 12309.

ROVACON XV, October 5-7

This convention will be held at the Salem Civic Center in Salem, Va. Guests of honor include Forrest Ackerman, John (007) Gardner, Hal Clement, George Alec Effinger, and Allen Wold. Events include a huge open gaming area, a masquerade, an art show, panels and workshops, films, a banquet, Japanimation, and an over-100-table dealers' area. Registration: \$8 for the weekend, preregistered. GMs are welcome! Write to: ROVACON, P.O. Box 117, Salem VA 24153; or call: (703) 389-9400 after 5 P.M. EDT

VALLEYCON 15, October 5-7

This SF/gaming convention will be held at the Regency Inn in Moorhead, Minn., and is sponsored by the non-profit Red River Science Fiction and Fantasy organization. Guests of honor include Phil Foglio, Robert Daniels, and John and Linda Ross-Mansfield. Other features are AD&D® games, panels and workshops, an art show and auction, three video rooms, filking, and costume contests. Registration: \$5 for adults, \$4 for teens, and \$3 for children. Write to: VALLEYCON 15, POB 7202, Fargo ND 58109; or call: Tom (701) 280-1400; Steve (701) 280-1445; or Tony (218) 236-8357.

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION 8

October 6-7

This convention will be held at the University of Toledo's Scott Park campus in Toledo, Ohio. Events include AD&D® 1st and 2nd Ed., ALIENS®, ASL®, BATTLETECH®, CAR WARS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CYBERPUNK®, GURPS®, MBT®, PARANOIA®, ROLEMASTER®, SHADOWRUN®, SPACE HULK®, SPACE MARINES®, SPACE 1889®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, STAR WARS®, UP FRONT®, and WARHAMMER 40,000® and FANTASY BATTLE® games, as well as an auction, a painting contest, videos, an open gaming area, and a dealers' room. GMs are welcome! Send an SASE to: TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION, 3001 N. Reynolds, Toledo OH 43615.

ENBICON '90, October 12-14

*

This gaming convention will be held in the Student Union Building of the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B. Events include BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER®, AD&D®, SHADOWRUN®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, TORC®, and SPACE HULK® games, with a miniatures painting contest and contemporary war games. Registration: \$8 (Canadian)/weekend. Write to: ENBICON '90, c/o UNB Student Union, POB 4400, Fredericton NB, CANADA E3B 5A3.

QUAD CON '90, October 12-14

Sponsored by the Riverbend Gamers Club and the Game Emporium staff, this fifth-annual convention will be held once again at the Palmer Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and SHADOWRUN® games. Other activities include historical and computer games, a silent auction, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, and on-site food. Registration: \$4/day and \$7 for the weekend through Sept. 30; \$5/day and \$10 for the weekend at the door. Send an SASE to: The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577 (no collect calls).

RUDICON VI, October 19-21

Held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, this convention is sponsored by

the Rochester Wargamers Assoc. and the RIT Student Directorate. Events include a large variety of RPG and war gaming tournaments, miniatures-painting and art contests, SCA demos, a large dealers' room, historical miniatures, an auction, and a con party complete with costume contest. Registration: \$5 for the weekend. Dealers are welcome. Write to: RUDICON VI, c/o Student Directorate, 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

GAMEMASTER '90, October 20

This gaming convention will again be held in the Student Union Building of Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. The guest of honor is Gary Thomas. Events include AD&D®, MEGATRAVELLER®, CAR WARS®, WARHAMMER®, BATTLETECH®, GURPS®, STAR TREK RPG®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, CHAMPIONS®, and STAR WARS®. Other features are an original tournament adventure based on the film *Total Recall*, strategy gaming, open gaming, miniatures contests, and an auction. Registration: \$3 before Oct. 10, and \$4.50 at the door. Write to: Gamemasters' Guild, 1511 Bergeson, Boise ID 83706.

NECRONOMICON '90, October 26-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza in Tampa, Fla. The guests of honor are Jack C. Haldeman II and Lawrence Watt-Evans. Other guests include Timothy Zahn, Richard Lee Byers, Richard Louis Newman, and Prudy Taylor Board. Activities include artist and author panels, a masquerade, a trivia contest, a fan cabaret, gaming, an art show and auction, the Creatures of Night Pageant, and a charity auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue, Inc. There'll also be a dealers' room, a Friday night banquet, a 24-hour hospitality suite, and an Ygor party. Registration: \$15/weekend until Sept. 15; \$20 for the weekend or \$8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON '90, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

STAR CON '90, October 26-28

This convention is sponsored by Star Base Alpha and will be held in Menasha, Wis. Events include a wide variety of games and tournaments, as well as other activities. Write to: Star Base Alpha, 1112 R. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956.

COMMAND.CON TOO, October 27

The convention will be held at the St. Louis Community College in the Forest Park Cafeteria. Events include: RPGA™ AD&D® games; a plentitude of miniatures, board, and role-playing games; and the SAGA game auction. Registration: \$5. Write to: COMMAND.CON TOO, PO. Box 9107, St. Louis MO 63117; or call: (314) 727-1508 or (314) 721-1155 before 10 p.m. CDT (no collect calls).

GAMESCON '90, October 27

✱

This convention will be held at the Laindon Community Centre on High Road in Basildon, Essex. Activities include a RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, a painting competition, demonstration and participation games, and traders. Clubs, DMs, and players are welcome! Write to: Chris Baylis, 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex, England, SS15 5EG; or call: 0268-419933.

HALLOWEEN TOURNAMENT XI October 27

This convention will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Tucson, Ariz. Events include an AD&D® tournament, a raffle, and a costume contest. Prizes will be awarded.

Food and accommodations will be available on or near the site. Registration: \$5 at Things for Thinkers. Call: (602) 326-7679. For hotel information, call David Orahoad at: (602) 887-3983.

CONTRARY '90, November 2-4

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee, Mass. An honored guest is Michael Gray. Events include six RPGA™ tournaments, plus other RPGs, board games, miniatures, and painting and costume contests. Registration: \$15 preregistered. Write to: CONTRARY '90, 933 Belmont Ave., Springfield MA 01108; or call: (413) 731-7237.

GENERICON '90, November 2-4

This gaming convention will be held in the Coffman Memorial Union of the University of Minnesota—Minneapolis campus. Role-playing, board and war games will be featured, plus movies, an art show, costume contests, and tournaments. Registration: \$10 before Oct. 1; \$15 at the door. \$2 discount from at the door admission with the donation of nonperishable food items for Minnesota Food Shelves. Write to: GENERICON '90, 2835 Rice St. #817, St. Paul MN 55113.

CON CARNE '90, November 2-4

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Meriden, Conn. Events include: AD&D®, GURPS®, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS®, PALLADIUM®, CAR WARS®, PARANOIA®, and CALL OF CTHULHU® games; a live-action RPG (extra charge); a human chess game; speakers; workshops; a masquerade; a dealers' room; filking; an art show/auction; interactive literature; demos; and miniatures competitions. Registration: \$25/person, or \$20 per person in a group of 10 or more before Sept. 15; fees will be higher thereafter. Special hotel rates available through address below. Send two 1st-class stamps to: Games and Stuff, 501 Main St., Middletown CT 06457; or call: (203) 344-8895.

SCI CON XII, November 2-4

This convention will be held at the Holiday Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. The guest of honor is Kim Stanley Robinson, and the artist guest of honor is Bob Eggleton. This SF convention features panels, readings, videos, a costume contest, an art show, a hospitality suite, and gaming. Registration: \$20 until Sept. 21, and \$25 thereafter. Write to: SCI CON XII, Dept. DR, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

SOONERCON 6, November 2-4

This convention will be held at the Central Plaza Hotel in Oklahoma City, Okla. Guests of honor include Lois McMaster Bujold, Dr. William F. Wu, Alicia Austin, and Susan Satterfield. Events include open gaming, an art show, a video room, British TV, a masque and a masque dance, an art auction, and a contest for the "Worst-Dressed Sentient Being." Registration: \$10 until October 10. Write to: P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74159.

GAME-FEST '90, November 3

This convention will be held at Kaspar's Ark, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, SHADOWRUN®, ASL®, AXIS & ALLIES®, and BATTLETECH® games. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706.

ROCK-CON XVII, November 3-4

This convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests of honor are Jim Ward, Tom Wham, and Lou Zocchi. Activities include over 100 gaming events, with RPGA™ tournaments, the annual auction, a dealers' room, and the Don Snow Memorial AD&D® tournament, sponsored by the RPGA™ and Black Hawk Distributors. Judges are needed! Registration: \$5 for one or both days. Write to: ROCK-CON XVII Game Fair, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

UMF-CON '90, November 3-4

Beat the snow to the University of Maine-Farmington Student Center for this convention. Events include AD&D®, GAMMA WORLD®, TOP SECRET/SI.™, miniatures, war, and board games. Registration: \$3/day or \$5 for the weekend preregistered; \$4/day or \$8 for the weekend at the door. All games have an additional \$2 table fee. Write to: Table Gaming Club, Student Center, 5 South St., Farmington ME 04938.

PROVOCATION, November 10-11

Organized by the Quebec Gamers' Assoc. (AQJS), this convention will be held at Pierre-Dupuy High School in Montreal, Quebec. Activities include 33 hours of nonstop gaming, plus an auction, open gaming, an art show, and a figurine contest. Registration: \$21 U.S./weekend and \$13 U.S./day. Write to: PROVOCATION, Box 63, Station M, Montreal PQ, CANADA H1V 3L6; or call Christine: (514) 596-0115, or Daniel: (514) 252-3032.

CONTEX 8, November 23-25

This convention will be held at the Hilton Southwest in Houston, Tex. Guests include Robert E. Vardeman, Sherlock, and Willie Sirois. Activities include gaming, merchants, an art show, costuming, writers' workshops, filking, films and videos, plus the Contex Cross-Tavern Cosmic Tour. Dealers are welcome! Write to: Friends of Fandom, P.O. Box 266996, Houston TX 77207-6996; or call: (713) 729-6733.

1990 EUROPEAN GEN CON® GAMES FAIR

November 30-December 2

Europe's largest residential gaming convention will be held in Camber Sands, Rye, Sussex. Guests of honor include TSR's Blake Mobley, Jim Ward, Jeff Easley, Harold Johnson, and Jean Rabe, and free-lancers Larry Elmore and Tom Wham. Tournaments include AD&D® European Open, BUCK ROGERS™, STAR WARS®, 2300 AD®, SPELLJAMMER™, CALL OF CTHULHU®, BATTLESYSTEM™, and BATTLETECH® games. Registration: £39.95 including accommodation. Write to: 1990 EUROPEAN GEN CON Games Fair, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 3LB ENGLAND.

TROPICON 9, November 30-December 2

This convention will be held at the Ft. Lauderdale Airport Hilton hotel. Guests include Hal Clement and Bruce Pelz. Events include programming, filking, an art show, a video room, a dealers' room, a banquet, a trivia contest, a masquerade, and gaming. Registration: \$20 until Nov. 1; fees will be higher at the door. Write to: TROPICON 9; c/o South Florida Science Fiction Society, PO. Box 70143, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33307; or call Tony Parker at: (407) 391-4380.

SYNDICON III, December 8

This convention will be held at the International Inn in Orlando, Florida. The guest of honor is Rembert N. Parker, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include one- and two-round RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, with BATTLETECH®, ILLUMINATI®, CAR WARS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, SHADOWRUN®, SPELLJAMMER™, DIPLOMACY®, and DRAGONQUEST™ games. Registration: \$8; \$6 for RPGA™ Network members; \$10 at the door (all prices include four free events). Write to: SYNDICON III, 11324 Porto Court, Orlando FL 32821; or call: (407) 857-1896, or (407) 788-3014.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

GAMESCON '90

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TSR PREVIEWS

NEW PRODUCTS FOR SEPTEMBER

LNR1 *Wonders of Lankhmar*

AD&D® 2nd Edition game accessory
by Dale Henson

Based on the famous novels written by Fritz Leiber, *Wonders of Lankhmar* will bring many hours of high fantasy adventure to your campaign. This booklet is filled with easy-to-play one- and two-page adventures.

Suggested Retail Price: \$9.95/£6.50
Product No.: 9295

The Horde

AD&D® boxed set
by David "Zeb" Cook

Rising from a number of insignificant tribes into a powerful empire, the Horde, with its vast army of barbarian horsemen, becomes bent on conquest in the Realms. This new boxed set draws on the background, characters, and events of the Empires novels and The Horde module trilogy.

Suggested Retail Price: \$18.00/£11.95
Product No.: 1055

DDA2 *Legions of Thyatis*

D&D® module
by John Nephew

After your PCs have survived the rigors of DDA1 *Arena of Thyatis*, they must face even more devious plans spawned by a corrupt Thyatian senator. From the challenge of the arena and the terrors of the catacombs, the heroes must be clever and persuasive in order to escape the snares of Thyatian intrigue.

Suggested Retail Price: \$5.95/£3.95
Product No.: 9296

MLA2 *Night Moves*

MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ module
TSR Staff

Innocent people are being caught between bouts of gunfire on the war-torn streets of New York City. The gangs are warring. The police need help—superpowered help. They need you! Can you bring the gang wars to an end?

Suggested Retail Price: \$8.95/£5.50
Product No.: 6895

Battle of Britain

World War II simulation game
by Richard Borg

This new game is an historical simulation that deals with the air war over Britain in World War

II. Using miniature planes and full color cards on a colorful board of Great Britain, the game details the numerous attacks by German air squadrons on the British Isles. Never surrender!

Suggested Retail Price: \$29.95/£22.50 + VAT
Product No.: 3030

The Gates of Thorbardin

DRAGONLANCE® Saga Heroes II Trilogy,
Volume Two

by Dan Parkinson

Beneath Skullcap are the remains of the dark wizard Fistantanilus and the path to the gates of Thorbardin. Buried along that perilous path is the magical helm of Grallen, son of King Duncan, tragic hero of the final battle of the Dwarfgate War. The finder of Grallen's helm will be rewarded by a united Thorbardin, but he will also open the gates of the realm to fresh horror and chaos.

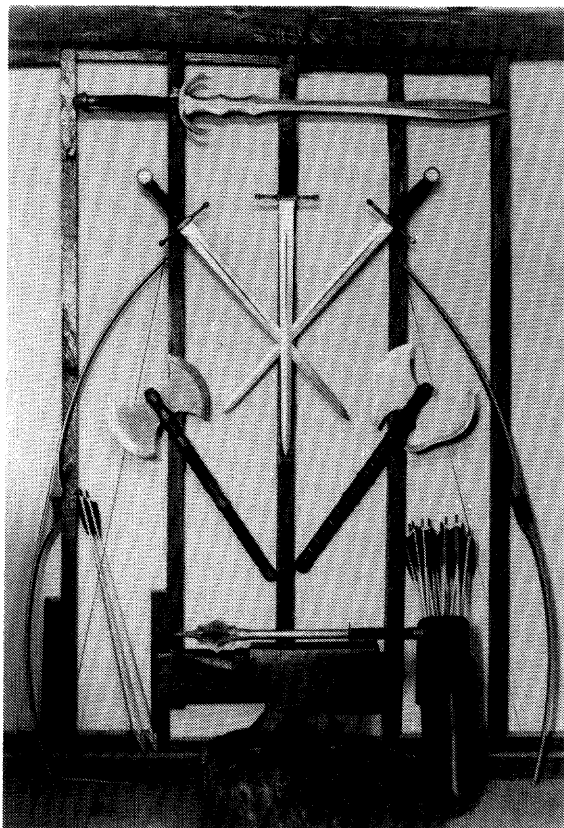
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Product No.: 8335

Homeland

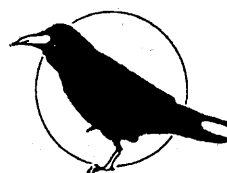
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NEW PRODUCTS FOR OCTOBER

RA1 *Feast of Goblins*

AD&D® RAVENLOFT™ module

by Blake Mobley

A dose of horror arrives just in time for Halloween! Will your PCs survive in the domains of Ravenloft? Find out in *Feast of Goblins*, the first AD&D® adventure based on the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set! The module includes a RAVENLOFT™ DM's screen, player record sheet, and full-color poster!

**Suggested Retail Price: \$10.95/£6.95
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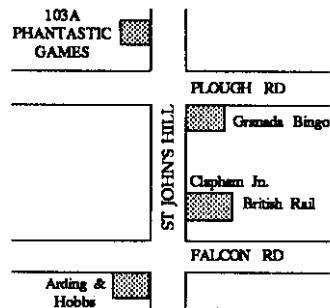
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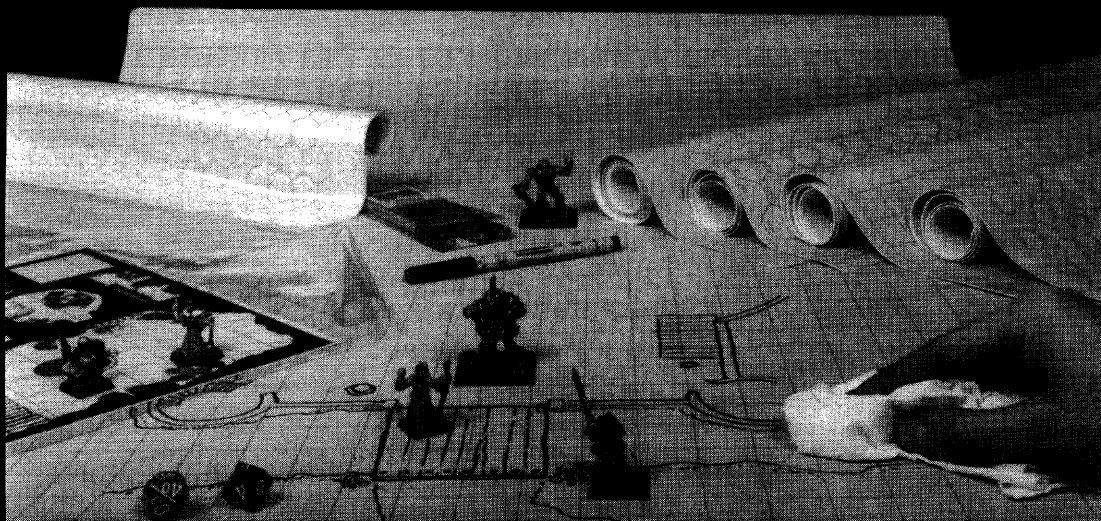
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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (old SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This edition of "Sage Advice" continues to examine the major fantasy settings for the AD&D® game. Krynn and Oerth were covered last month; this month we visit Abeir-Toril.

FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting

Which of TSR's modules are set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting?

Only products with the FORGOTTEN REALMS banner on the front cover are actually intended for use in this setting. A complete product bibliography (good up to March 1990) appears on page 154 of the AD&D 2nd Edition hardbound volume *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures*. Of course, a clever DM could place almost any adventure in one of the many unexplored corners of the Realms.

Where is the game information on the magical book, *The Tome of the Unicorn*, described? The table at the back of FR4 *The Magister* says information is given on page 41 of the DM's *Sourcebook of the Realms*, but the information given there is pretty spotty.

Full details on *The Tome of the Unicorn* are given in the DM's *Sourcebook of the Realms*, pages 92-93.

Where can I find a full description of the greenstone amulets worn by the Flaming Fist mercenary company? I understand these items can recharge themselves; how often can they do this?

A description of the greenstone amulet is found in FR4 *The Magister* (TSR product #9229). A greenstone amulet automatically begins recharging itself whenever its charges drop to zero. The

amulet spends 1d4 x 11 turns recharging itself, gaining one charge each turn. It remains nonfunctional during recharging.

There are several wands and staves described in FR4 that can explode if broken accidentally. Will they also explode if broken deliberately, even by nonwizards?

These items are *extremely* unstable and will indeed explode if broken deliberately, even by nonwizards. Note that this is not the case with normal items. Most wands and staves do not explode when broken in any fashion. The more powerful items, such as the *staff of the magi*, explode only when held and broken by a wizard who deliberately calls for a retributive strike.

Volume 1 of the *Kara-Tur* boxed set mentions a new scholar character class (on page 18). Where can I find information on this class?

The "class" mentioned on page 18 is that of the mandarins, which is a *social* class in Shou Lung, not a character class. Check out the section on the mandarin on page 7 for details.

There is at least one character in the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels who fights with a scimitar in each hand. How is this possible, since a scimitar is a size M weapon?

The character you are thinking of is Drizzt, from the Icewind Dale trilogy. In this particular case, there is a game rule that covers the use of a medium-size weapon in each hand. See the notes on the two-weapon style in the fighting styles section of the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, pages 61-64.

Will there be a FORGOTTEN REALMS atlas?

Yes. The *FORGOTTEN REALMS Atlas* (TSR product #8442) is due for release this August and will cost \$15.95/£10.95.

We all know that Elminster does a lot of traveling. Has he ever been to Oerth or Krynn?

Perhaps, but he's not saying.

When reading the sourcebook in FR1 *Waterdeep and the North*, I had trouble finding some of the features mentioned in chapter one on the maps provided with the boxed set.

Check out TM4 *City of Waterdeep Trail Map* (TSR Product #9401) or the map showing Waterdeep in FR5 *The Savage Frontier* (TSR Product #9233). Also see "Welcome to Waterdeep," in DRAGON issue #128, which has a map and other materials that were dropped from FR1.

Exactly what kind of landscape is indicated by "clear" terrain areas on the various Realms maps?

Clear terrain is rolling and open, and generally free from major obstacles such as impenetrable forests, mountains, etc. Most clear terrain is plains or farmland, but there also can be low hills, solitary trees, clumps of woodland, and gullies.

To what scale are the various city maps found in the *Cyclopedia of the Realms* (from the FORGOTTEN REALMS boxed set) drawn?

The scales vary from map to map because cities of different sizes were presented in the same-size spaces. You can get a rough idea of the scale for each map by looking at the narrow sides of the buildings shown; most are about 20' long.

What are the scales of the various FORGOTTEN REALMS maps supposed to be? I have them all, and some of the scales seem to be at odds with the others.

The two continental maps in the boxed campaign set are drawn at 1" = 90 miles. The area detail maps in the boxed set and in the modules are 1" = 30 miles. The keys on the trail maps show the scale as 1" = 90 miles, but this is a misprint. The scale-of-miles bar at the upper right-hand corner indicates that 1" = about 142 miles, a scale that works quite well when you compare distances between major landmarks shown on both the trail maps and the continental maps.

When will the replacement maps for the boxed campaign set be available?

New maps are already available. However, the only difference between them and the maps in the early print runs of the boxed set are the colors. The current maps have colors that match the map colors in the modules and in the *Kara-Tur* boxed set. If you have older maps (ones with pale blue oceans and light beige clear areas), you can get color-corrected maps

by sending \$5.00 to the Mail Order Hobby Shop and requesting replacement maps for product number TSR1031. The address is:

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I'm having a lot of trouble fitting the *City of Waterdeep Trail Map* with the *Kara-Tur Trail Map*. The closest match I can get leaves a big gap near the Great Sea and a rather abrupt end to the Dust Desert.

Here's how things were explained to me: The Waterdeep map is drawn from a western perspective. The farther east you go, the less accurate it gets because westerners don't know a lot about the East. Likewise, the Kara-Tur map is drawn from an eastern perspective and gets less accurate the farther west you go. In any event, remember that the boxed sets are meant to be campaign settings. Each DM's campaign is going to be a little different. An area where even the published information is uncertain provides the DM with at least one mysterious place where only he knows what's going on (at least until PCs actually explore it).

It sounds to me like you're going about fitting the maps together in the right way. The maps match pretty well if you just line up the borders, but you have to adjust a little to match the city of Solon (which is shown on both maps) and the southern and northern coastlines. When overlapping the maps, I suggest putting the *Kara-Tur* map on top, as the mountains east of Solon really are there. Individual DMs will have to decide where the Dust Desert really ends—the edges would vary with the annual weather anyhow. The empty gap in the south is unexplored territory, but there has been some discussion of filling it in with an Arabian land.

What is the polar circumference of Abeir-Toril?

Abeir-Toril's exact dimensions are unrevealed, but the planet is roughly Earth's size. This would make its equatorial circumference about 25,000 miles. The polar circumference would be slightly less, about 24,900 miles.

How can a PC become a Red Wizard of Thay?

The Red Wizards are nasty, reprehensible, and generally subject to the whims of their superiors. This makes them unsuitable for use as PCs in most campaigns. However, *FORGOTTEN REALMS* Adventures (TSR product #2106) contains basic information on the Red Wizards, including how to get in (see page 127).

Would it be accurate to assume Chult is an African setting?

No. Chult is more akin to Conan Doyle's *Lost World*, complete with dinosaurs, lost tribes, etc.

Can PCs who travel from Faerun to Kara-Tur learn martial arts or other Oriental proficiencies? Can western races adopt Oriental classes? For example, can there be elven samurai?

Western (gajin) characters can learn Oriental proficiencies if they can find Oriental masters to teach them. Finding such masters should require lots of good fortune, skillful role-playing or both. Since there are spirit folk samurai, I see no reason why elves couldn't also become samurai (maximum level 12) with proper sponsorship. However, the samurai are a social class as well as a character class, and first-generation gajin samurai of any race would be rare indeed.

The maps to module N5 *Under Illefarn* have many numbered rooms that aren't described anywhere in the text. Is there dropped text, or are these rooms simply empty? Where do the stairways on maps 14 and 15 (areas G and H) lead?

The undocumented areas have no fixed contents. There can be random encounters, such as patrols, in these rooms, or individual DMs can populate them as they see fit. The westernmost stairway in map 14 (room 113) leads up to map 16, room 121. The north stairway (off the central corridor) leads up to map 15, room 114. The south stairway leads up to map 17, room 124. The central stairway on map 15 leads down to map 14, as already described. The eastern stairway leads up to map 16, room 118.

What lies on the other side of The Spine of the World mountains? A friend told me it's the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting.

All of what lies to the north of The Spine of the World is unrevealed, though the *City of Waterdeep Trail Map* indicates that the southern edge of the Endless Ice Sea begins there. However, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting lies on another planet, Oerth. The SPELLJAMMER™ supplement contains rules for traveling between Oerth, Abeir-Toril, and other fantasy worlds. Of course, DMs are free to construct their campaigns as they see fit, and there's nothing wrong with lumping the two settings together on one world.

I remember seeing something about flying ships in the Realms. Are these spelljammers?

No, they are not, though many of the rules governing spelljammers also would apply to them. The only details ever revealed about these ships were published in the article "Sailors on the Sea of Air," in DRAGON issue #124.

It seems to me that there are no libraries in the Realms. Candlekeep charges an outrageous fee just to browse, but shouldn't there be some place where a character can go to

improve his knowledge?

Modern-style libraries where visitors have free access to the books are unknown in the Realms. There are, however, plenty of libraries. Sages, guilds, and governments keep extensive collections of books and scrolls, but access to them is on a need-to-know basis (or pay-as-you-go, in the case of sages). For example, any large and prosperous shipwrights' guild would have a library with volumes on ship design and construction, carpentry, forestry, logging, blacksmithing, rope making, weaving, sewing, and a host of other subjects, both practical and esoteric, related to shipbuilding. Members would use the library as a resource for training new members and for answering difficult or unforeseen questions that might come up during day-to-day business. The guild also would jealously guard its library to prevent competitors in other cities from learning its professional secrets and to prevent those people who are not guild members—like adventurers—from learning how to build their own ships and putting dues-paying guild members out of work. Though literacy is more common in the Realms than it was in the historical medieval world, the people of the Realms understand that knowledge is power and they do not share it readily.

I would like to use the rental villas in Waterdeep (as described in the *City System* boxed set) in my campaign. How big are they and how much do they cost to rent?

According to Jeff Grubb, each villa has 9 to 12 rooms on two or three floors, plus a basement. The cost to rent one depends on the building's size and condition; 400-600 gp per month is a good range.

Some of the Street Scenes tables in the *City System* set are missing the numbers 81-88. Other tables have two entries numbered 105. How do you get around those flaws when using the tables in play? Also, each table goes up to number 120. This is fine, but the instructions on page 15 say to roll percentile dice and add or subtract one or more modifiers also given on page 15. The highest total modifier is +6, so how can you get a total of 120? What do you do if a negative modifier gives you a result of less than one?

The missing and duplicated numbers are probably typos. Treat a result of 81-88 as either an 80 or an 89, as you wish. Likewise, just pick one of the two listed entries on a result of 105. The text on page 15 says to add +20 to the roll for all encounters that take place after dark, though this is not shown on the table. (The correct modifier for Night scenes is +20. The modifier for Witching Hour scenes is +19). Treat any negative result as a 1, and treat any result of 121 or more as 120. Q

THE ECOLOGY OF THE

GRIFTON





Taking flight with *Felis aquila*

by Christopher Kederich

From a popular lecture by forest warden Defaeben Knazzer, of the Royal Zoological Gardens of Zinfinjord:

One of the best known of all fantastic creatures, the griffon is seen both as a feared monster and a much-desired flying mount. The griffon is accurately described by sages as a ferocious avian carnivore, and it is probably the most successful large flying predator, being more common and voracious than any sort of dragon. It is the true king of the air.

The origins of the griffon are unclear. Some scholars have speculated that it was the result of magical experimentation by an ancient civilization. Yet the legends of griffons seem to be older than the earliest records, older than this theory would explain. Like the centaurs, griffons are probably the result of natural magical forces granting an adaptable creature the traits of different mundane animals. In the griffon, these forces produced a powerful being indeed.

Anatomy

In appearance, griffons resemble great lionlike cats with the taloned forelimbs, wings, and heads of great eagles, but with prominent tufted ears. Their body fur colors range from golden bronze to dark brown, the colors darkening with age. Males have touches of red on their breast feathers; females have duller coloration than males.

The size of an adult griffon is on the order of the largest of lions and tigers, being of similar proportions though with an especially heavy chest and with the shoulders to accommodate wings and flight muscles. While standing on all fours, the overall length from beak to rump measures 7-10'. An adult male may weigh up to 1,100 lbs., with females averaging one-third less.

Artists and heralds have incorrectly pictured griffons as having thin, sticklike forelimbs. In fact, a griffon's forelegs are as heavy as a lion's and are capable of

striking like clubs with sufficient force to break a victim's neck. The raptor's talons, which are up to 6" long, can not only slash but can clench in a bone-crushing grip. Like lions, griffons can bowl over large animals with one sweep of a foreleg.

With pinions fully stretched, the griffon's wingspan is often eight or nine yards across, a magnificent and awe-inspiring sight. Though without tail feathers and looking entirely lionlike, the griffon's tail helps it steer and stay balanced in flight. The moderately pointed wings are well suited for soaring and for diving onto prey. A griffon's feathers are gold in color, often with patterns of black washing across them.

The eyes of the griffon have been said to resemble living flames, usually being ruby red, burning yellow, or icy blue. Griffons have the same keen vision that giant eagles have, being able to see a horse from two miles away in the air. It is said that if a griffon could read, it could see normal print clearly from 100'. It lacks infravision but can see clearly in the dark as its eyes gather the faintest of light. Its sense of smell is only average for a predatory animal, still much better than that of humans but inferior to that of dogs. It might be possible for a griffon to track quarry by scent alone, and one would certainly be able to detect most enemies approaching from upwind, but not as readily as could many of its prey. A griffon's sense of hearing, on the other hand, is very sharp. It can hear hoofbeats on packed earth from at least a mile altitude, and a trainer's call will reach it from the same distance.

Flying

Eagles can roll completely over in midair and griffons can do likewise, but not without some difficulty. Due to their great size, it would take longer to correct an error or regain height, making aerobatics dangerous. Midair loops and somersaults may be possible under good conditions but probably not with a rider. Nevertheless, the

griffon is a nimble and powerful flyer, though less so than the Pegasus, which is both faster and more agile in flight. The griffon is built to catch moderately quick prey and carry it back to a high nest.

Griffons can fly in almost any weather, having an elemental feel for the sky and its conditions. They can sense changes in the weather and can detect downdrafts and thermals. Griffon riders need at least as much training to learn how griffons fly as their griffons need to learn how to carry their riders. Griffons can be intractable at times and simply may not want to fly, much less convey a rider, though usually not without good reason; they are quite sure of themselves in the air.

Hunting

Very few carnivores are as superbly capable of hunting as is the griffon. With its combination of speed and agility, as well as its natural armament, the griffon is a tenacious predator. Although a griffon can strike large prey out of the air, it favors hunting ground-dwelling animals, especially herd animals and most especially horses, which it craves. The variety of potential prey is very large, as griffons are opportunistic hunters; they feed on almost anything from the size of a rabbit to a buffalo—including, at times, humans. Unlike lions, griffons are not scavengers and will usually ignore food that isn't fresh. A griffon can locate prey in near total darkness, but it normally hunts during the day as it is easier to fly on sun-heated thermals and many herd animals are up and about during this time. Open plains, savannahs, and rolling grasslands are its preferred hunting grounds.

If it is injured, a griffon can function as a land predator as well as an aerial one, though it will be slow and is then most likely to become a man-eater. When acting as a land hunter, it will behave much as a big cat, though it shows some flexibility in adjusting its hunting techniques. It may stalk and pounce like a leopard, or stalk

and charge like a tiger; if there are two or more griffons, a group charge, as per the lion, might be used. If the griffon's wings are partially functioning, it is then able to drop onto its prey from a tree or cliff.

Although griffons can and do hunt a large variety of prey, equine flesh is their obsession. Griffons wing their ways at once toward any horses they see, selecting the group that offers the best feeding with the least danger. Young griffons pay no heed to warriors who may be riding or leading horses, attacking with no regard for swords or arrows. An older griffon, however, devotes a few moments to consider such an attack in advance. An unprotected wild horse is an immediate target, but a column of cavalry may be given up as too much trouble unless the griffon is extremely hungry, stupid, arrogant, or has never fought warriors before.

Griffons are not often clever, but experienced ones have learned a few tricks. Adventurers tell tales of griffons that bide their time until after dark when a large mounted party is bedded down, then approach on the ground from upwind to spook the horses into bolting from the camp. The griffons then follow the horses for a safe distance before making the kill to minimize the hazards from the party. If horses are tied down, a quick kill from the air and an immediate escape will ensure something worth eating after the party is gone. The less-intelligent lion is well known for similar tactics.

Family matters

The griffon's range is extremely wide, from the tropics to the subarctic, and from coastal areas to high mountains. Because of the wide variety of prey it can hunt, and its ability to fly long distances for food or water; the griffon is the dominant predator in most areas unsuitable for other large hunters.

A griffon's preferred nesting place is in the most remote and inaccessible part of its territory. High places commanding a wide view of the surrounding countryside are typical, including cliffs, mountaintops, mountainous caves, and large ruins. Even some great trees can support the weight of a griffon's nest. These nests are normally far apart, but if prey is plentiful griffons can be gregarious and live among a small cluster of nests within earshot of each other.

As with eagles, griffons are monogamous and mate for life. They are devoted parents and will defend mate and young unto death. The young are fed first from any family kill. It is the male that hunts while the female guards the nest, again much as with eagles. Typically, two agate-colored eggs are laid at a time, hatching in four weeks. The hatchlings are ravenous and eat at least their weight in food a day for the first three months of life. At four months, the fledglings are the sizes of large dogs and can climb and move about on the ground. The parents now begin to

teach their young hunting methods without using wings. At six months, the young begin flight training and aerial hunting, which lasts at least six more months. The nest is moved if necessary until the young can fend for themselves. Leaving the parents after two years, the young travel great distances before establishing their own home ranges.

On occasion, two or more griffons (usually males, typically brothers) team up and hunt together. This may last for a short time, a lifetime, or until one finds a mate. Less cautious than mated pairs, these bachelor groups are more likely to be seen than others and are the basis on which most people form their impressions of griffons. Intensely loyal to each other, these griffons will back each other up in almost any situation.

Griffons rarely fight among themselves in the way many other predators do. The males are very protective of females, even if they are not mates. It is this instinctive sense of loyalty and discipline that makes a griffon a much more dependable battle mount than a horse or most other flying steeds. Griffons are naturally combative and fear almost nothing, yet neither will they fight for no apparent reason.

Treasure

Suspicious and bold, griffons may investigate anything that interests them despite possible danger. Attracted to shiny objects to decorate their nests, some griffons collect assorted treasures solely for their looks and will fight strenuously to protect what is theirs, but may trade precious items for something more interesting.

The treasure types to be found in a griffon's nest are those that have survived examination and rough handling. Potions are likely to be broken because the griffons like to toss colorful things about and try to catch them in their beaks, or drop them to hear how they sound upon hitting the rocks. Furs, clothes, and leather goods are apt to be employed in tugging matches or claw sharpening. Scrolls similarly suffer unless well protected. Only durable metal objects will last.

An exceedingly rare species of griffon is known to have a peculiar sense that allows it to detect gold up to 10' away. Since gold is of little value to griffons except as nest decorations, they do not often exercise this ability. Even so, this species can tell a fake piece of gold at a glance. A narrow strip of dark fur over the middle of the chest seems to grant this ability. It is possible to use this fur to enchant an item to locate gold. The difficulty in this is that the fur must come from a live griffon, and few if any are willing to part with their fur. If fur is removed from a live donor (which is necessary in order for this power to be transferred), the griffon's gold-detecting ability fades for a year while the fur grows back on its chest.

Being both possessive and curious, even a trained griffon will not take kindly to

being completely left out of the division of the adventure's spoils, especially if the griffon's sense for gold helped to locate the treasure. On the other hand, a nestless griffon is likely to quickly tire of its valuable "toys" and will soon discard them.

Training

Griffons can be trained to be companions and mounts with striking loyalty, though not without unique problems. Horses are tamed and trained with ease by comparison; domesticated horses find the company of other horses or herbivores often makes them feel secure. Griffons are more solitary and dislike crowds. They do poorly in captivity, needing open spaces to exercise. Most would eventually refuse to eat if caged, making it difficult to hold them against their will.

Gaining a griffon is difficult at best. Griffon eggs and fledglings command a high price—2000 and 5,000 gold pieces each respectively on the open market. Raising the young is often more trouble than most adventurers expect. Fledglings must be captured before their first feathers grow in at three months of age in order to bond with an owner. If taken later, the griffon will not readily accept its new "family" and has a 10% per month chance of deserting (if mistreated, 20% per month; confinement is considered mistreatment).

Training the young must include hunting in order to make the fullest use of the griffon's abilities and to maintain a balanced mind. Here, the outdoor skills of the trainer become the common ground between rider and griffon. Although flying is instinctive, the fledgling must be coaxed into flight. During the training, a trainer may teach the griffon special skills to be used on an adventure, such as dropping bombs or grabbing ground-based objects from the air.

Unlike the griffon, any adventurer will find learning how to fly competently very difficult. The time required is usually about 11-16 weeks. Use of *speak with animals* spells or the like will lessen the time by another 2-5 weeks. Those with less than normal agility and dexterity cannot fly with any competency, but they may be tied on and carried about as baggage. Characters with low endurance will not be able to fly without becoming helplessly ill from motion sickness. Griffons bob up and down a great deal in their flight, unlike pegasi, making riding one rather like being a jockey in a steeplechase. A large part of riding one lies not merely in being strapped down but in hanging on, resisting the wind and moving with the animal to make it easier on both parties.

On occasion, adventurers may earn the gratitude of a griffon by releasing it from a trap or saving it from some illness or injury. If made to feel a part of the "family," such a griffon is more likely stay with a group indefinitely. Since only adult griffons are likely to be encountered in this

way, there will be no need for flight or hunting training. The griffon will be most likely to bond to an adventurer to whom loyalty is an important virtue.

One cannot subject griffons to the indignities commonly placed upon horses, like corraling, hobbles, and branding. Bit and bridle would, at best, interfere with their own defenses and would probably be intolerable. Vocal commands and body movements are sufficient for nearly all situations, and a hackamore helps for special ones. The best battle-trained horses are trained to obey complex vocal commands; griffons are both more intelligent and naturally battle-ready creatures, and they can obey even more complex orders.

A horse saddle will not fit on a griffon. Any saddle made for a griffon must take into account its wings and should not hamper flight. Sidesaddles are out of the question. If made out of horse leather, a saddle may even be eaten. The saddle may be positioned in front of or behind the wings; it may be less tiring to the griffon for the weight to be behind the wings but will restrict the rider's vision and ability to fight. Barding is rarely used, as it always lowers flight speed and maneuverability. Simple and light head, neck, and chest armor should create no problems as long as it weighs much less than a rider.

A rider should be able to do anything that can generally be done 'in a high wind while bobbing up and down strapped between the flapping wings of a large predator that will probably object if the rider sits up and creates drag. If properly buckled in, the rider will have at least one free hand much of the time and be able to fight or grasp objects. Flight clothing should take into consideration wind chill, weather, weight load, etc.

As mounts, griffons should not be counted on to travel overland even though they can handle rough terrain easily. If you are going to ride—fly. Griffons may be more argumentative and uncooperative than horses, but they don't spook at rabbits, birds, or shadows. On the other hand, horses are not often known to hungrily chase rabbits, deer, or other horses, and they don't eat riders who've been abusive to them. Griffons are fearless if aggressive and loyal if moody. Griffon males usually make better mounts, being not only larger and stronger than females but also calmer and more patient.

Unfortunately, there are other problems involved in owning a griffon mount. For example, after long contact with griffons, a rider may walk upwind of someone's horse; what will the horse do upon smelling its worst enemy? After an adventure, heroes may want to relax in town for a while—and so might their loyal griffons, whether or not the townspeople agree. Naturally, the disappearance of any horses will be blamed on the griffons. And if a character is eating steak, his griffon will not easily tolerate left-over iron rations.

Abilities

Just how strong griffons are is a matter of measurement. Griffons can fly carrying loads as great as their own body weight, though not for long periods. With their taloned forelimbs, griffons can grasp objects and hold them, probably damaging anything fragile. If so trained, they have a 40% chance to bend bars or lift gates. With the same basic strength as a lion, a griffon will be far stronger than any normal humanoid. On the ground, a griffon should be able to do the same sort of feats that a huge lion or tiger can manage.

A griffon's appetite is remarkable. Even if not flying, a griffon will eat more than a similarly sized lion, typically on the order of at least 25-30 lbs. of fresh meat a day. If flying, it will eat half again to twice as much when possible, depending on whether or not a load is being carried. When hungry, a griffon becomes very irritable and aggressive. Although a person to whom the griffon is loyal is in no danger of being eaten, anything else is considered fair game.

Without proper food, the griffon will be a poor flier and very uncooperative. When food is available, griffons sometimes consume tremendous amounts and may be too gorged to fly well, but won't require another feeding for some time. Riders should make sure that their griffons don't overindulge themselves between adventures and become lethargic.

Friends and foes

Being choosy, griffons will not serve as mounts or companions for humanoids prone to mistreat animals. These are such beings as the griffon would consider dirty, disgusting, and incapable of returning trust, such as orcs, gnolls, and kobolds. A griffon will also not hunt other griffons.

A griffon has very few natural enemies, and none count it as regular prey. Only humanoid species present a significant threat. Some creatures will nevertheless always be enemies with griffons. Hippogriffs and pegasi are no match in a fight and will normally be chased if rarely caught. Manticores are slower if more difficult prey. Harpies will always be attacked at the first opportunity. The hypnotic song of the harpy does not affect the griffon as it does a human, but if such a song is heard, it will enrage the griffon and bring it winging in to attack. Perytons are another natural adversary; although invulnerable to most nonmagical attacks, they are subject to predation by the innately powerful griffons. Thus griffons help clear the skies of certain hazards that threaten humanity.

Having as few natural allies as they have enemies, griffons are compatible with giant eagles, for example, and are generally on good terms with them. Those races and classes more attuned to nature, such as elves and druids, are best apt to understand and be compatible with griffons.

Centaurs, on the other hand, and other quasi-equine species (even if they don't taste like horses) will be in perpetual strife with griffons.

Sacred to Apollo, griffons are said to draw this god's chariot home from his winter retreat. Several other deities have held griffons sacred and may have had something to do with their creation, but whatever their origins, the griffon is such a successful predator that it needs no guiding force to sustain it. There are even reports of sentient griffons which may represent a separate species largely indistinguishable from the familiar one and which may wish to remain unrecognized.

Miscellaneous

Griffons have a language that sounds like a collection of squawks and growls to other creatures. It is composed mostly of words relating to flying, hunting, weather, and the visual appearance of things. It is not suited to abstract concepts.

Like tigers, griffons can swim, but if their feathers are wet they must dry off before flying. By nature compulsively neat and tidy, enjoying baths and frequently preening for hours, griffons are not likely to accept filthy would-be riders or accommodations.

The lifespan of a griffon is very long, some serving several generations of a family. Actual lifespan is dependent on many factors but may extend as long as several centuries. One hundred and fifty years is considered average in the wild.

A griffon is a magnificent creature to be treasured by all humanity. Dangerous it is, but marvelous, too. As long as it wings through the skies, we can look up at it and know the meaning of courage.

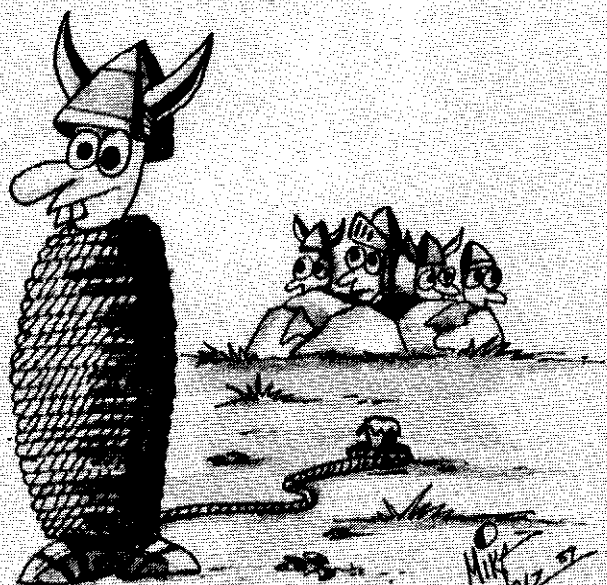
Game information

In combat, griffons prefer to use their beak and talon attacks first. If diving onto a victim from a greater height (at least 60') or a victim that is flying more slowly (MV fly 24 or less), the griffon will double its claw damage and gain a +2 to hit, but not be able to employ its beak in the same round. If a griffon can strike an enemy on the ground with both of its foreclaws, it can employ its rear claws for an additional 1-4 hp damage, but at a -2 to hit because they are not accustomed to doing so unless so trained. A griffon can use the rake even in midair, but it loses altitude rapidly and disengages as soon as possible. Its last means of defense may include a wing buffet, but this does only 1-2 hp damage per wing because the wings are feathered and soft. If a flying griffon snatches someone from the ground (requiring one to-hit roll), it causes 1-6 hp damage from roughness even if it does not mean any harm. Training the griffon in this snatch can lessen the damage to 1-4 hp.

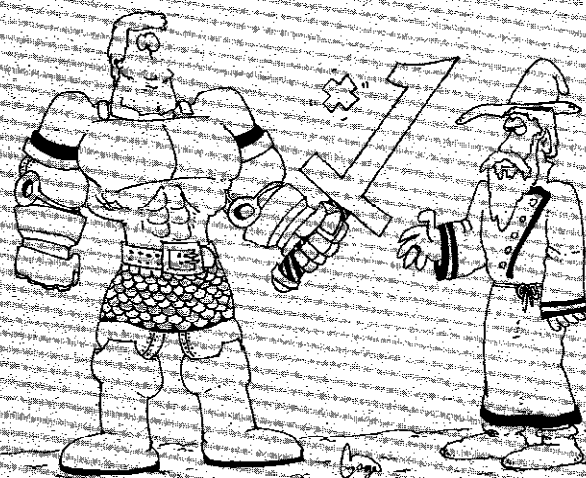
For more information on flying, see "Flying the Friendly(?) Skies," in DRAGON® Magazine #124.

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DRAGONMIRTH



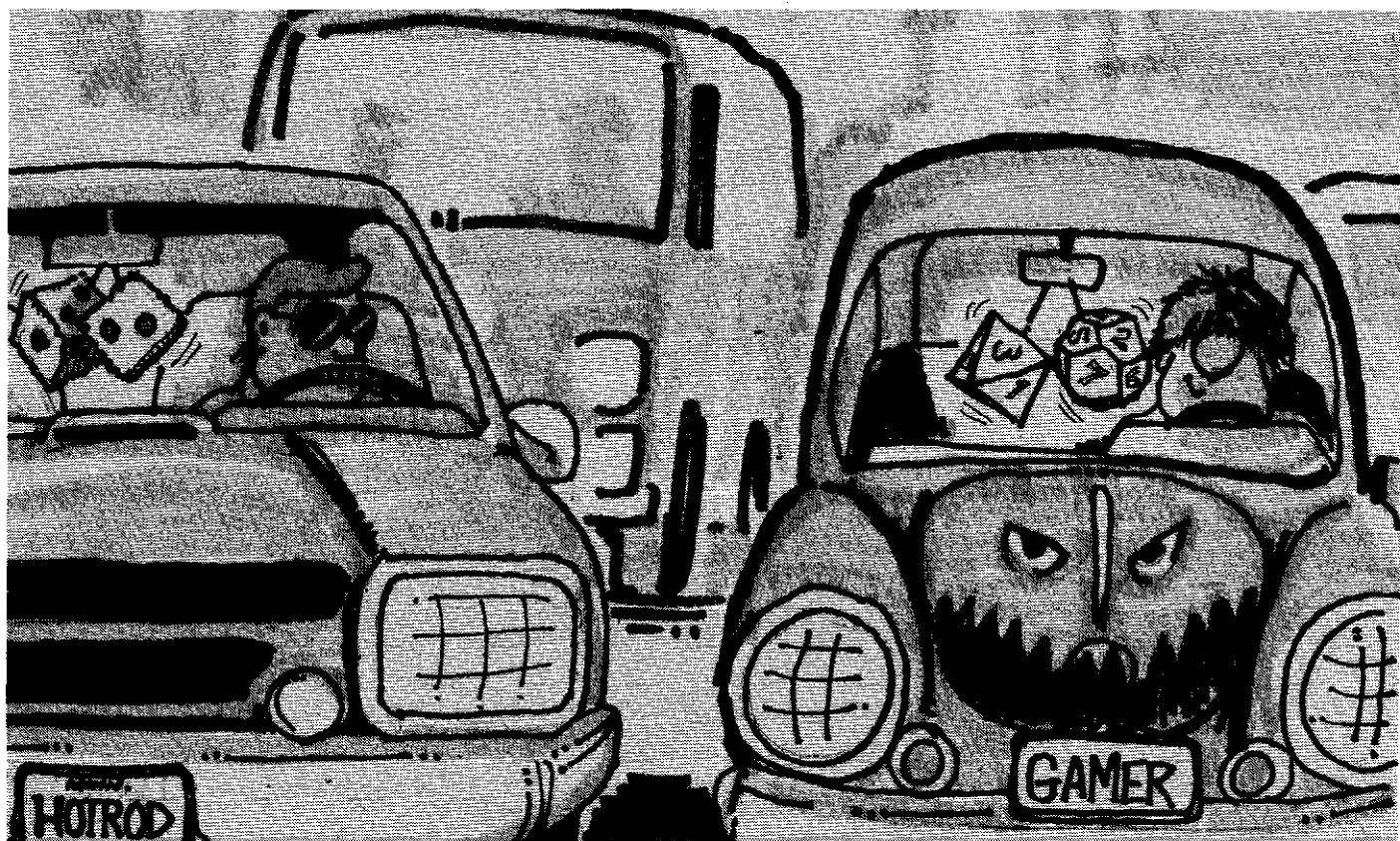
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"It's a +1 sword of obviousness."

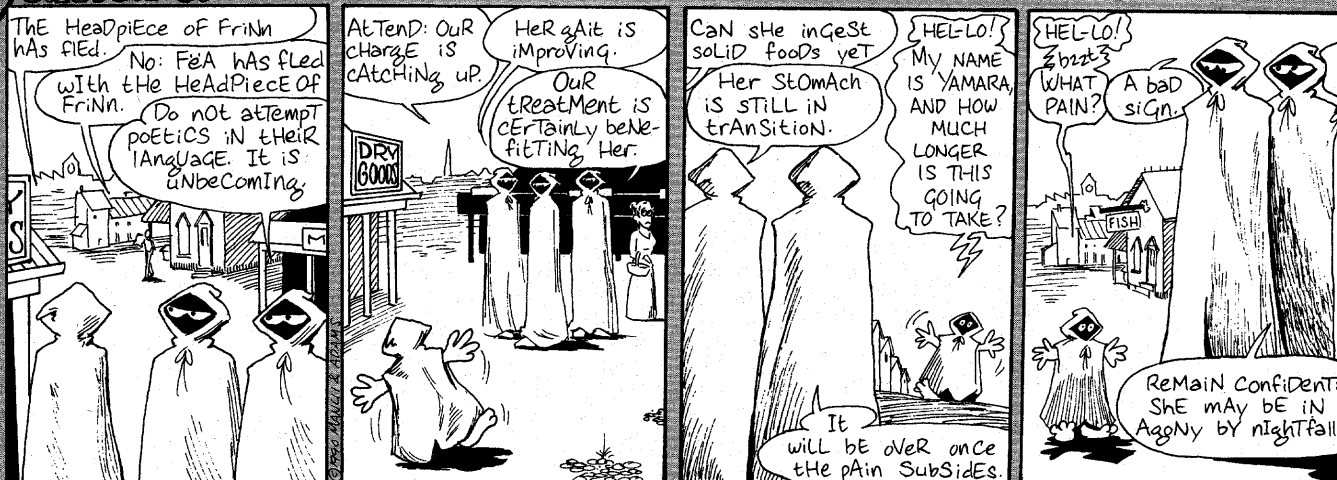
Somehow, Andy was again volunteered for "decoy duty."



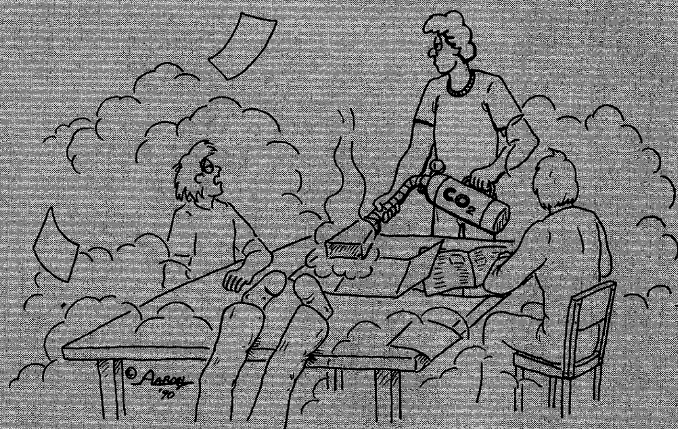
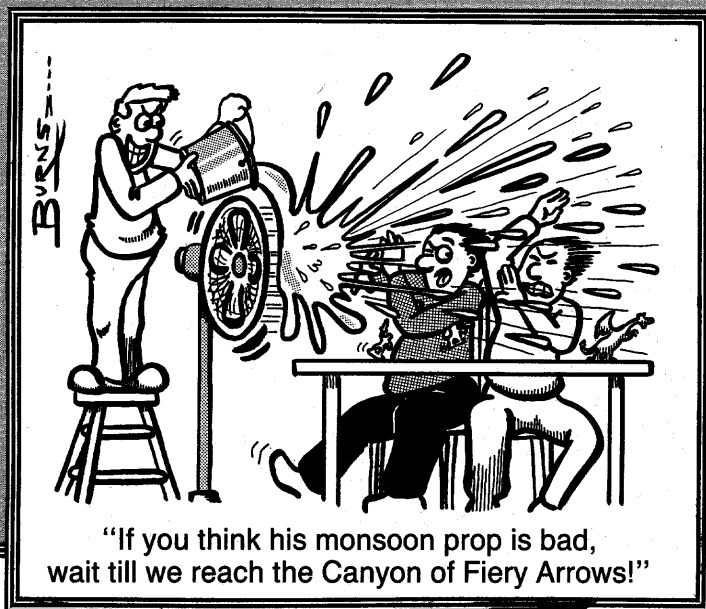
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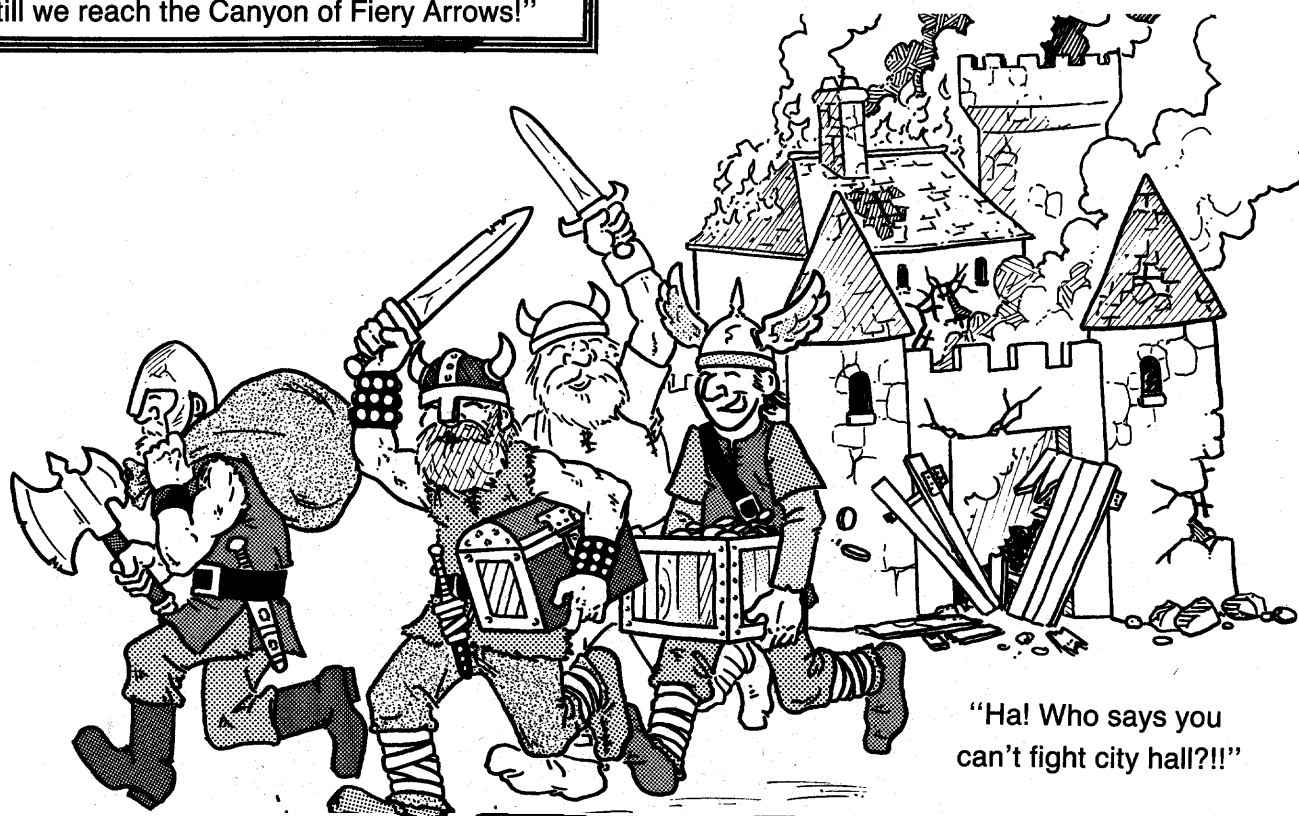
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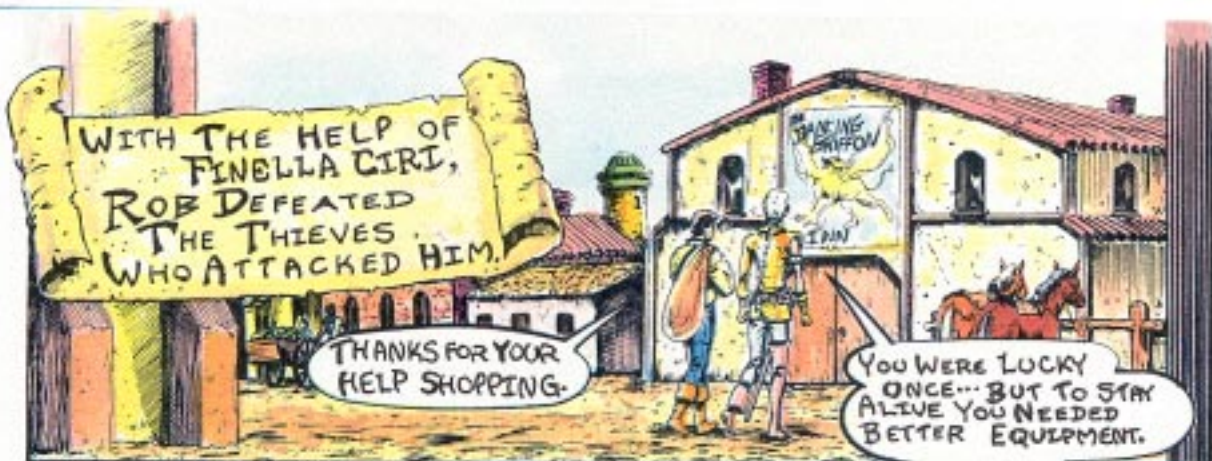
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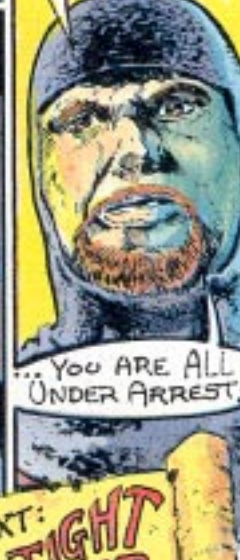
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PART 6



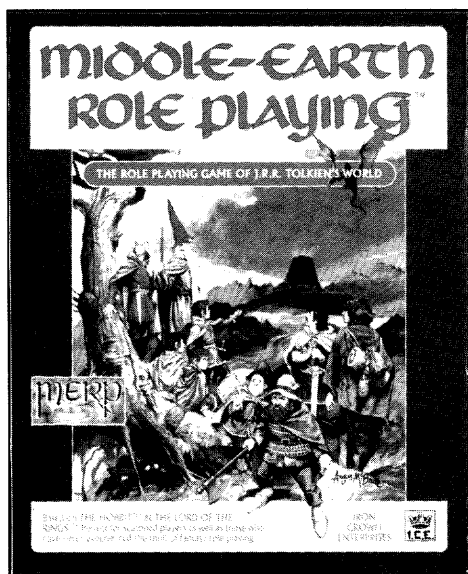
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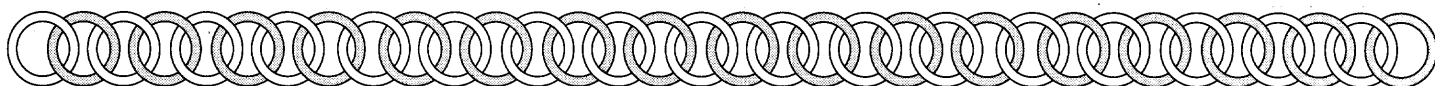
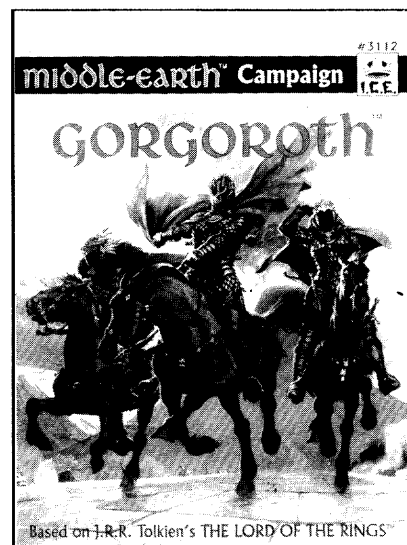
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Voyage

Continued from page 45

that it is difficult to make out the shapes of nearby coasts and mountains. What we observed of the lands below was completely alien to us. Visibility was limited to less than a hundred miles at most.

Most inexplicably, the clouds at the horizon always seem to rise up toward the zenith of the sky, anywhere one looks. No matter how far the *Princess* travels, she always seems to remain at the bottom of a circular bowl of clouds.

But the oddest part remains over our heads. The red sun stands still at the zenith. Dark shapes slowly cross the red sun's face and block sunlight at various intervals, just as the moon sometimes eclipses the light of the sun on our world. These celestial bodies seem to be of various sizes and move at different speeds. We need, once again, to defeat the skyshield and see for ourselves where we are.

Nyxmir 24, 1965: Again, the trusty *Princess Ark* vanquished the skyshield. In truth, it was much easier than the last time. This skyshield is much weaker than that of our world. With a decent breeze, full sails pushed the *Princess* through the skyshield. That was a relief for the everyone on board, given our last experience with this maneuver.

What we discovered beyond was just as incredible as our first journey into the void. It appears that we are *within* a gigantic globe, perhaps the size of our homeworld. A small sun shines in the hollow globe's center, while clouds swirl and stretch across the lands below. From this high up in the airless void, we could finally observe new continents and vast oceans. A continuous chain of mountains girdles the globe, separating the sphere almost perfectly into two hemispheres; we are at the top (or bottom) of one. A huge continent occupies almost all of one side of this inside-out world, nearly reaching to what I assume are the worlds poles.

The poles are the great clues to the identity of this new world. At the "poles," two large openings, each over a thousand miles across, lead out of this globe. Through them I can see the starry constellations so common to our homeworld.

This world is none other than the bowels of our own Known World! It seems our world is not a gigantic sphere filled with stone and fire. Our celestial orb is hollow! And probably inhabited! The inner surface has its own sun, although not hot enough to scorch all life from the lands underneath.

The world inside also has floating continents, much like our flying cities of Ar. They orbit the central sun, some within the airless void, others as low as the cloud cover within the globe's skyshield. The shadows of these flying continents provide regular nocturnal periods to those lands underneath their paths, though the rest of

the lands remain in permanent daylight. The lands below, as well as some of the flying continents, have air, clouds, storms, and endless new mysteries to be unveiled to the Greatest of the Empires.

Nyxmir 25, 1965: It is now clear to me how we got here. The openings of—what shall we call it—the Hollow World produce a mirage that shield them from the view of those vessels flying outside, in the void above the outer-world. When we pursued Herr Rolf, we simply could not see the southern pole opening. That ignorance almost caused our doom.

The polar region where outside gravity curves into the Hollow World remains totally dark because neither the Hollow Worlds sun, nor the sun of the outer-world can bring light. Moreover, it remains conveniently covered with clouds and is the scene of constant blizzards. This region is the one producing the *anti-magic* effect that forced the *Princess* to land.

This also means that Herr Rolf knew where he was flying, and I suspect he also knew of the Hollow World. This is a most annoying thought. More than ever, the Heldanner must be found and returned to Myoshima.

To be continued. . .

As always, if you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the *Gazetteers*, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Game Column, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. A number of your letters have been coming in and are finally answered at the end of this adventure. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always get our attention.

One question needs to be addressed by the readers of this series. The outcome of this saga will be affected accordingly. The question is: Would you rather . . .

A. Continue exploring the Known World? (If so, what regions would you prefer?)

B. Begin a series of adventures in space (a la the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER™ set), such as the one presented in the last episode?

C. Dive back as soon as possible into the new Hollow World setting?

Please understand that these episodes are written four to five months before publication, so be patient. In the meantime, the *Hollow World* boxed set should have reached your favorite hobby shop by the time this episode sees print, should you need to learn more about this strange new world.

Vulcanian Sloth

Armor Class	6
Hit Dice	45
Move	120' (40')
Attacks	2 claws, 1 bite
Damage	2-12/2-12/3-36

No. Appearing	1 (1-2)
Save As	Fighter 25
Morale	7
Treasure Type	Nil
Intelligence	4
Alignment	Lawful
XP Value	18,500

The Vulcanian sloth is a gargantuan monster living in the region that stretches from the southernmost coastline of Vulcania in the Outer-World to the area south of the White Peninsula in the Hollow World. Although rare, it is more likely to be found in the Dark Lands at the southern entrance of the Hollow World. Unlike other sloths, this one is carnivorous.

The sloth grows to be 60' long. Its front paws have very sharp claws useful in combat or to grip the ice, and their width allows it to walk on thick snow. The sloths thick white fur provides excellent protection against antarctic temperatures.

Though semi-intelligent, the sloth is capable of limited reasoning. It has the ability to communicate its feelings and to read other beings' minds by empathy, a nonmagical and natural ability the sloth uses when it meets another creature acting in a friendly or unexpected fashion. Particular individuals and events affecting the sloths life are usually remembered.

The Vulcanian sloth can live to be 150 years old. Once every 10 years, it digs a large burrow in the ice and finds a mate. No more than two adult sloths will be found in the lair, in addition to 1-2 pups (10% chance).

Sloths normally hunt alone, digging through ice to dive for whales, seals, walruses, and large fish. They occasionally surprise surface dwellers by swimming under ice, then suddenly smashing through the ice to attack.

Letters

I am very pleased to see the inclusion of a regular D&D game column within the pages of DRAGON® Magazine. With this feature, I am now a regular purchaser. . . Unfortunately, I think I have spotted an error in the first installment of Prince Haldemar's journal. In DRAGON issue #153, under the entry for Nyxmir 11, 1964 AY, it reads: "These strange messengers . . . seemed to make quite an impression on local Karameikan barons." However, the Grand Duchy of Karameikos did not come into being until 1970 AY, as described in GAZI!

Oh, you had to check, didn't you! Yes, that wizard was mistaken; the Grand Duchy wasn't in existence at that time. Haldemar was referring to the land owners in the area that would become Karameikos four years later. These would be ethnic Traldar owing fealty to the Empire of Thyatis. The Empire moved in around 1900 AY. Several readers caught that one (I hate historical sticklers). Thanks.

I am glad that you started writing D&D game articles like "The Voyage of the Princess Ark," but that isn't enough for gamers who play the original RPG. It's kind of frustrating when a new issue of DRAGON Magazine comes in the mail and all the wonderful articles are written for the AD&D game.

I agree! When will readers of this series send in some wonderful articles for the D&D game? DUNGEON® Adventures would love some D&D modules, too. [Editor's note: Send for our writer's guidelines first! And D&D game players should be aware that some of our articles can be used with almost any fantasy role-playing system, not just the AD&D game.]

I am incensed by the way the Thyatian Empire and those within were treated in "The Voyage of the Princess Ark," part one (issue #153). I am also angry that after all these years, you would allow someone to come along and upset the game universes of so many of your loyal D&D players. Many players have taken for granted that the map printed on the inside cover of the Master DM's Book was accurate. Now we are told that we are in fact using areas that really don't exist in the form in which we were led to believe they did. Finally, to let the article come from an Alphatian explorer who is biased against the Thyatians is unacceptable. I have built a Thyatian empire using the map as a guide. Please inform the Alphatians that any time they wish to take on my army of 8,000,000 men and my navy of 16,000 ships (half of which are iron and carry advanced weaponry), I'll oblige them.

The Thyatian Empire is treated as it should be, according to the Alphatian point of view. That's part of role-playing. It doesn't mean that I or TSR, Inc. have a particular preference for any of these cultures. You are welcome to introduce a Thyatian point of view in this magazine. Of course, Thyatis will be just as biased against everyone else as is Alphatia, as imperialist powers should be!

It has been clear for some time that the Masters Set map didn't make much sense. Many of our customers did question it. As it stands, the map shows Thyatis covering the entire Known World. That just isn't correct. Why play in an erroneous setting? (By the way 8,000,000 soldiers, plus an estimated 960,000 sailors, is more than the total population of metropolitan Thyatis.) What is provided in this series' upcoming episodes are only suggestions, new approaches to the D&D game world for you to use or ignore. No one is forcing you either way.

What other Gazetteers are coming out in the future, and when?

GAZ13 The Shadow Elves saw print this June, while GAZ14 The Atruaghin Clans is due out in spring 1991. Both of these settings have direct links with the Hollow World. PC3 The Sea People qualifies as a full-fledged Gazetteer. More might come

later on: Sind, the Heldann Freeholds, or Wendar. In what order would you prefer to see them?

Why did the AD&D 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ rules leave out guidelines for the D&D game?

The new BATTLESYSTEM rules were redesigned to cover the AD&D 2nd Edition rules in more detail; there wasn't room for D&D game material. An upcoming update of the D&D game rules will include a complete set of guidelines on how to convert your rules and favorite modules into and from the AD&D game, including the BATTLESYSTEM rules.

Why is the area where Cestian gobblers grow unpopulated?

Because gobblers grow there! Natives in neighboring regions consider the region taboo. The land is also very poor for farming; the soil allows rainwater to seep down rapidly and accumulate in large underground lakes, from which it flows away. All it may really take is a community of courageous farmers and hunters to destroy the gobblers, dig wells, irrigate the land, and build towns to support a viable economy. Sounds like Thyatian stuff. . . .

Are any more BLACKMOOR™ modules planned for the future?

No. The Known and Hollow Worlds are keeping us busy enough as it is. DA5 City of Blackmoor was never published.

Brief reference is made in the Dawn of the Emperors boxed set to the "Knights of the Air." Are these connected to the "Knights of the White Drakes" mentioned in module B3?

Yes; these are the same people. The Knights of the White Drakes is the name of a single unit among the larger Knights of the Air.

The scale used in the city map of GAZ3 The Principalities of Glantri does not make sense. For example, the City Library ends up measuring 15-20' in diameter. Is this correct?

No. Here's a better set of scales:

City map: 1" = 80 yards

Inside cover maps: 1" = 50 yards

Geographical map: 1 hex = 8 miles

This should bring the overall length of the Great School of Magic up to 900' and the diameter of the library tower to 120'—not huge by any standards, but now you may breathe normally without fear of causing entire bookshelves to fall over. Note that the boats on the canal were added essentially for illustration purposes—their scale is a bit off to keep from reducing the larger ships to mere spots on the canals.

Why did TSR switch from the usual 24-mile-per-hex scale to the 8-mile-per-hex scale?

The 8-mile-per-hex scale was chosen

when we created the Gazetteer line in order to make the larger countries fill as much of the surface on a large fold-up map sheet as possible without changing the actual size of each printed hex itself. The 24-mile hex would have been too big and would have limited the amount of detail our current maps provide. Conversion between 24-mile and 8-mile hexes is easy (a 24-mile hex contains seven 8-mile hexes, three hexes across). A standardized hex size allows DMs to overlap two Gazetteer maps of neighboring nations with little difficulty. The current map of the Known World is now available, with all nations assembled, in TM1 and TM2, the two Known World Trail Maps.

How is it possible that highly developed civilizations discovered during the voyage of the Princess Ark aren't aware of existence of Thyatis, Alphatia, or (for that matter) the Known World?

The Known World does not always make perfect sense. It never did, ever since its creation some 10 years ago. It just happened that way. The various climatic and weather patterns of the individual nations and cultures within the Gazetteer-covered region are not compatible with each other; for example, we have an Arabic desert bordering a Viking region. Better yet, how about a major river starting 24 miles from a pseudo-fiord, then flowing away to the sea on the opposite side of the Known World!

Come on. After all, this is fantasy, remember? Everything does not necessarily need to be logical. We are dealing more with fun and role-playing rather than hard science.

So what if we have another highly developed civilization elsewhere? Perhaps it did discover the Known World, but kept the discovery secret for political, economic, or religious reasons. Perhaps it hasn't developed reliable sailing skills, and so treats news about the Known World as rumors and fairy tales. Immortals could have prevented the discovery, too. It could really go in any direction.

What happened to the names of the halfling clans in GAZ8 The Five Shires?

We planned to publish them, but there, wasn't any room for them in GAZ8! Author Ed Greenwood plans to release that material in an upcoming issue of RPGA™ Network's POLYHEDRON™ Newszine.

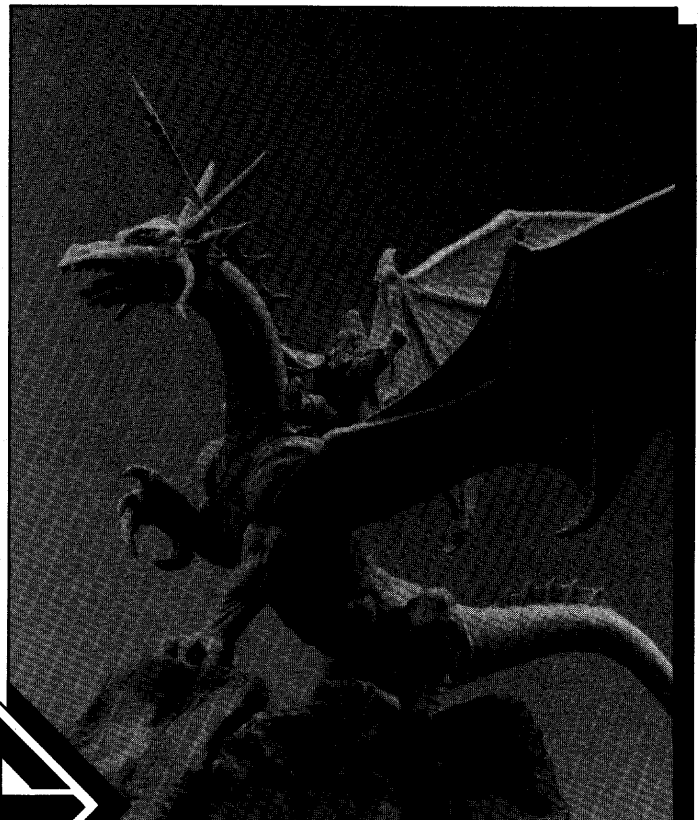
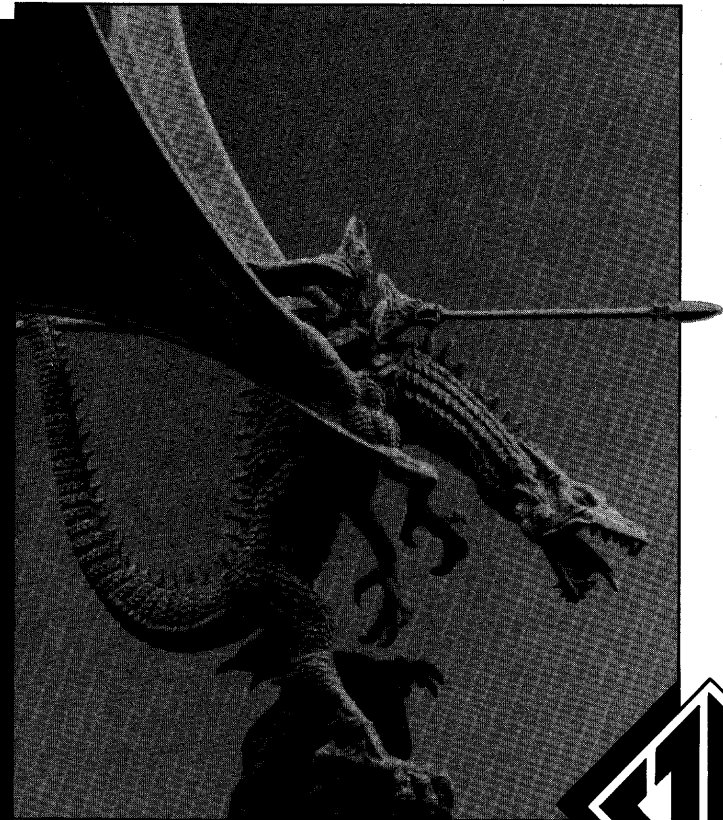
Thanks for your input.

Ω

Special Note!

Many among you may already have the D&D® Hollow World boxed campaign set. Please note that the scale on the two hex maps equal 40 miles per hex. We apologize for the omission. The glitch will be repaired in upcoming reprints.

DRAGON WARS!



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Through the LOOKING Glass

©1990 by Robert Bigelow, Jay Clenndenny, and Ralph Cooper



Here's something you can fight about! BATTLETECH® campaign rules, part 1

In DRAGON® issue #144, this column presented a miniatures battle taken from a campaign based on FASA's BATTLETECH® game, run by the Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan. The battle was well received by the readers, and many people requested copies of the rules we used to set up that campaign. As it turned out, the campaign died shortly thereafter due to bookkeeping problems. Since then, our club has worked hard to produce viable BATTLETECH campaign rules for long-term play.

The breakthrough came through the efforts of one of our members, Jay Clenndenny, with the assistance of fellow member Ralph Cooper and with the rest of the club offering suggestions and playing devils advocates. Jay has had long experience in smoothing out gaming problems, as he heads the club's playtesting efforts for different game companies and is a long-time board and miniatures game player. He has also won the National STAR FLEET BATTLES Patrol Ship Tournament for the past two years, and he co-authored the PANZERTRUPPEN 1990 modern-armor miniatures rules.

This article begins a two-part series giving you the full set of BATTLETECH miniatures campaign rules that we now use. Changes may be freely made to these rules, though all changes should use common sense. The following BATTLETECH

materials are required for campaign play: the second-edition BATTLETECH boxed game, *The BATTLETECH Manual: The Rules of Warfare*, and *BATTLETECH Battle Maps*. Supplemental rules to be used as needed include the MECHWARRIOR® game, the AEROTECH™ and CITYTECH™ boxed sets, *DropShips and JumpShips*, *The Mercenary's Handbook*, *BATTLETECH Technical Readout 3025*, *BATTLETECH Technical Readout 3026*, and the five Successor States books on the Houses involved. Other materials used (such as articles from gaming magazines) must be agreed upon by all players and the judge at the start of the game.

A few hints might help your campaign:

1. See if you can get a copy of FASA's old Successor Wars poster through your local hobby shop (or assemble a map using the maps in the backs of the Successor States books), and mount it in your gaming area. This poster can help you plan strategy in the campaign. If you mount the poster on corkboard, you can use color-coded pins to show which House's forces own which planets. The poster's map scale is 1" = 16 parsecs.

2. Make sure that each House has a minimum of two players, and that at least one person from each House is available for playing at each meeting time. Players who wish to play specific Houses should be allowed to do so. The other players should choose the remaining Houses by

drawing slips of paper from an opaque container; players who chose randomly may trade Houses, but all House vacancies must be filled. Don't allow gamers to take the roles of mercenaries until this is done. This allows for smooth-flowing games with quick-playing turns and battles.

3. Pick a judge who will have final veto power when game disputes take place. The judge must have complete knowledge of the game rules and (if he plays) should play a mercenary force so that his rulings are as unbiased as possible. A judge should intervene only if the Houses cannot come to a decision while using the game rules.

4. House Liao may be given a few extra benefits when the game is being set up (such as two or three extra turns of production), as it may be so easily attacked by other Houses.

These rules assume that the players will show good judgment with their unit productions and deployments. If players go out of their way to abuse the rules in certain areas (particularly with regards to vehicles), then the judge reserves the right to make corrections and changes with the approval of the five heads of Houses and the mercenary representative. The bottom line is to have fun and not abuse the rules.

Questions on these campaign rules may be directed to: Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, c/o Friends' Hobby; 1411 Washington Street, Waukegan IL 60085, U.S.A. Please enclose an SASE for a reply.



BATTLETECH® Campaign

Introduction

These rules offer House-specific guidelines for many aspects of the campaign game, but the production rules are generic and apply to all Houses. Generic rules are outlined first; House specifics are covered later. The campaign can be expanded to include FASA's AEROTECH game for fighter combat, and production can be modified to represent the actual production abilities of each House, as noted in the Successor States books and other sources.

All references to weights are rounded up to the nearest half ton. Note that production costs are given in terms of the tonnage that must be processed by a production facility.

Production

Each House has several production facilities located throughout its space, as noted in the BATTLETECH Campaign Planetary Directory herein. Each production facility is subject to the following rules:

1. 'Mech facilities have the following capacity limitations per turn:

Size	Capacity
Assault	100 tons
Heavy	100 tons
Medium	120 tons
Light	100 tons

The light 'Mech facility may not turn out more than two of the same 'Mech model in one turn (e.g., it cannot build three Locusts in a single turn).

2. Vehicle facilities can handle all vehicle

sizes, each building up to five vehicles with a total weight of up to 125 tons per turn. (Houses must also buy infantry out of this fund.) Each vehicle facility can produce only one vehicle for every 25 tons or fraction thereof of capacity. Also, each facility may allot a maximum of 40% of its total production capacity to fusion-engine vehicles, hovercraft, and VTOLs. Vehicle facilities may also produce weapons for fixed defenses, but these must be made in 25-ton lots.

3. DropShip facilities can handle all ship sizes, up to 1,000 tons total per turn.

All facilities may carry over the construction of units from turn to turn. (DropShip facilities must do this anyway.)

Expansion: A facility may expand its size by applying up to 10% of its current capacity for five turns. The facility then increases by the amount invested per turn (e.g., a heavy 'Mech facility of 100-tons capacity that invests 10 tons of its capacity for 5 turns becomes a 110-ton 'Mech facility.)

New facilities: A facility may also build a completely new type of facility using the rules in the previous paragraph; after five turns of construction, the new facility's capacity will equal only half the investment per turn. (In the above example, the heavy 'Mech facility applying 10 tons of its capacity to construction could create a new facility for light 'Mechs with a five-ton capacity.) Facilities may also be started on planets that do not have such facilities. The cost is the same as above, but construction requires 10 turns to complete, as well as control of local starports (for shipping the parts).

New pilots: A House's production must also cover the cost of all new pilots needed for 'Mechs and vehicles. Each new pilot

starts as a 4-4 (in pilot and gunnery skills). Houses may lower each number by one for every five tons spent in production (it is assumed that money that would have been spent on a factory instead goes for pilot training). Houses may also knock off one point from one of the two skill scores if the unit being piloted is represented by an actual miniature. (This was a club rule designed to encourage miniatures use!) In no case may new pilots go below 2-2, and each House is allowed only one 2-2 per turn; other pilots may be lowered to 3-3.

Replacement parts: Production is also used to create replacement parts. When a House fails to repair something, it must be replaced with an exact duplicate. The cost of any nonweapon replacement item is equal to the item's weight in tons.

The replacement weight of a weapon is found by taking the number of critical spaces destroyed divided by the original number of critical spaces. The result is the percent of the weapon's original weight that must be replaced (e.g., a PPC has one critical space left out of three, so it must pay 66% of seven tons to be replaced).

The replacement weight of infantry equals the squads post-combat size divided by its original size, then multiplied by the original cost in tons (see "Infantry Costs" in next month's column). An infantry squad may be put together from several damaged squads, but the infantry involved must be of the same type.

Any leftover production space may be used for replacement ammunition and parts. The only exception is that specific and unique equipment for a unit (e.g., lifters for a hovercraft or an arm from an Atlas) must come from the specific pool of production. Houses must also use specific production for the pilots and initial ammunition for the unit in question.

Resources: Each facility needs resources in order to operate every turn. Resources are measured in tons and come from resource planets. Each turn, a House can assign as many tons of resources as are available to the production plants of its choice. The total resources for each House will equal the number of planets and their resource values that are controlled within that House's sphere of influence. A House must be in control of the spaceport of a resource planet in order to ship resources. A production turn may go like this:

TOTAL RESOURCES: 1000 tons

Assault: 100 tons for an Atlas

Heavy: 70 tons for a Grasshopper, 5 tons for pilot modification

Medium: 45 tons for a Phoenix Hawk, 55 tons for a Shadow Hawk

Light: 40 tons for two Locusts, 30 tons for a Panther, 10 tons to expand (1st turn)

Vehicles: 60 tons for an LRM carrier

DropShips: 520 tons for a Leopard

Other: 20 tons for ammunition, 20 tons for parts

Stockpiles: Any resources not used in production are stockpiled at the facility of the House's choice. All stockpiles must be documented to avoid confusion and loss.

Legality: Only units from official BATTLETECH publications and articles may be used in the campaign. The only exception is that up to 10% of each facility's capacity may be used to work on modified 'Mechs or vehicles, which must be built from scratch and must be approved by the judge before they can be used.

Statistics on each House's units and production must be checked by players of two other Houses for accuracy. The location of a House's units need not be disclosed. Detailed espionage is assumed to provide such information in game terms.

Ensuring the legality of mercenary construction is the responsibility of the House employing the unit. Illegal units will be removed from the game by the judge.

DropShips & JumpShips

As AeroSpace Fighters are not used in these campaign rules, DropShips can land safely on planets and can participate in battle as noted in *The Rules of Warfare*. DropShips can carry the number of 'Mechs listed for them in FASA's *DropShips and JumpShips* manual or else can carry one vehicle of up to 100 tons (or two vehicles, each of 50 tons or less) per 'Mech cubicle. VTOLs may be carried in place of the listed AeroSpace Fighters on each DropShip (one VTOL per AeroSpace Fighter cubicle). Each DropShip can carry only one set of units per turn; Houses can drop off and pick up vehicles, 'Mechs, and troops after each move (e.g., a House can't carry 50 units in one Leopard). All troops must debark from a DropShip at the end of its movement phase.

Each House is assumed to have enough JumpShips each turn to move its DropShips. Mercenaries are assumed to have enough transports to move their units, but their DropShips and JumpShips are not represented in the game.

JumpShips move 48 parsecs per turn (3" on the old Successor Wars map) when making regular attacks. Each House's JumpShip movement is unlimited within its own territory, but unlimited movement may not be combined with making attacks during the same turn; attack movement is limited because it involves crossing into hostile territory, careful maneuvering, etc. JumpShip and DropShip movements change when making raids (see "Raids").

Planets

For game purposes, three types of planets exist:

1. *Resource planets:* Each has resource centers from which resources may be shipped to production facilities on other planets.

2. *Production planets:* Each has one or more production facilities and might have



resources as well.

3. *Strategic planets:* These have no resources or production facilities, but they are located in strategically important stellar positions.

Each planet can have several types of installations on it. These installations include:

1. *Cities:* Cities are always found adjacent to any of the following four types of installations. More than one installation may be present with any one city.

2. *Resource centers:* These are found only on resource planets and on a few production planets. Control of the city adjacent to a controlled resource center is not required in order for a House to acquire resources from that center.

3. *Production facilities:* Resources are turned into manufactured items (like 'Mechs) at these installations. In order for a House to produce items in a production facility, it must control the city adjacent to the facility as well as the facility itself.

4. *Spaceport facilities:* These are the only places from which a planet can move resources off-world. Without control of a spaceport, a House cannot ship resources off-world, and such resources will accumulate instead at the local resource stockpile.

5. *Resource stockpiles:* These accumulate as noted, either adjacent to starports or adjacent to resource centers.

Facilities and combat: Resource centers, production facilities, and spaceports may not be shot at; they are considered too valuable by all sides involved. (If a "scorched earth" campaign is allowed, in which the defensive side destroys its own facilities to prevent their capture or in which the attacker wants to knock out facilities it cannot capture, this

rule is suspended.) Military units wishing to capture one of these installations must cross one gaming board (as defined in "Terrain & Maps" in the section on "Battles") to reach the installation. However, two boards must be crossed to reach a production facility, the first being the facility's perimeter. Fixed defenses prohibit attacking forces from landing closer to or on top of these installations. This rule also allows for battles to be fought across a variety of environments.

Captured production facilities and resource centers need one turn to begin working for their new owners. New owners might also need to control adjacent spaceports and cities. All partially completed units captured in their installations become the property of the new owner and may be finished as usual, subject to these guidelines.

If a partially completed unit exists at a facility that is under attack, the defender may use that unit with all of its attacks and defenses at half strength. The incomplete unit gains a 4-4 pilot (he hasn't finished his training).

Battles

Each battle uses *The BATTLETECH Manual: The Rules of Warfare* as a guide, and initiative is used. Each battle continues until one side has no active units remaining on the playing area.

Terrain & Maps: For game purposes, a "board" is a 5 x 5 square of 25 BATTLETECH game maps, each marked off in hexes for movement purposes. Terrain for each battle is randomly determined using the Terrain Generation Tables (see "Terrain Generation" in next month's column). Once terrain is generated, a rough map of the



playing area must be made and kept so that future battles in this area may use this same map for setup. Wind direction must be rolled each time the area is used for battle (see "Terrain Generation" in next months column).

Stacking: A House may have at most 24 'Mechs and vehicles on a single board, though with appropriate off-board support for its force (but no more than two artillery units and two other units, such as LRMs). If one side's force is larger than 24 'Mechs, it is assumed to occupy more than one board, and both attacker and defender must commit forces to each of the two boards (each battle is then played out in sequential order). Home Guard units do not count for stacking purposes.

Installations: For assaults against an installation, the fixed defenses placed at the beginning of the campaign are free for stacking purposes. If they are destroyed, the owning House may replace them (such replacements also do not count for stacking purposes). The defender is allowed to place up to 24 units (including additional fixed defenses, with every 25 tons or fraction thereof counting as a unit) in the city next to the installation. Each side may then bring in up to 24 units more (plus support) per board side that it currently controls. Thus the attacker must capture the territory around the installation in order to cut the defender off, and the defender must protect more than the installation alone or else face the prospect of being attacked from all directions.

Disengaging: Any unit may disengage from a battle and leave the game maps; once it leaves, it cannot return to that battle. In an installation perimeter battle, the defender must designate which edge of the playing area is closest to the installation he is defending. If the defender's units

do not disengage in that direction, they may not participate if the battle continues at the installation itself.

Time: Time has no meaning from one battle to the next. While this seems unrealistic, it is too hard to keep track of multi-board battles turn by turn and still keep everything straight. All perimeter battles take place first, followed by installation battles. Damage or wounds may not be repaired or healed while a unit moves from one board to the next, unless the House wishes to regroup and declare his intent not to pursue any further battles for that turn. Ammunition, however, can be replaced.

Artillery: Off-board artillery can be assigned to a particular battle and board, and regular rules governing its use are applied. Off-board LRMs are stationed at a specific point along a board side. Ranges are calculated by figuring the distance from the edge to the target in question, then adding three hexes to the range. Off-board LRMs may not be shot at and are always considered to be shooting by indirect fire. The owning House may change an off-board artillery unit's location at the unit's normal movement rate, or at half movement if the unit has no turret. Additional movement modifiers are added at whatever rate was used (cruise or flank).

Salvage

The winner of a battle may salvage the enemy's equipment, subject to the following guidelines:

1. An ammunition explosion that destroys a unit or three engine hits against a unit will make that unit worthless for salvage.
2. A House may scrap one or more of its units. Spare armor may be collected, with 50% of the remaining armor added to the

House's spare-parts stockpile at no charge. Engines and weapons may be salvaged, going to the spare-parts stockpile to await usage (when used, the House may make a free roll to replace an engine with an exact duplicate). All remaining ammunition is added to the House's stockpiles.

3. If a House decides to salvage an enemy unit for its own use, and the salvaged unit is not unique to a particular House (see "House-Specific Units"), it may repair the unit as one of its own but must pay 10% of the unit's total weight before it can integrate it into its own forces. If this is not done, the unit must be scrapped.

4. If a House decides to salvage an enemy unit for its own use, but the salvaged unit is unique to a particular House (see "House-Specific Units"), then the House has two options: a) It may repair the unit and use it in its own forces, except that it must pay a 20% fee for its initial use and an extra 10% fee for any parts required to repair the unit; or b) It may send the unit to an appropriate construction facility for study and research. In the latter case, the House must pay 10% of the captured unit's weight out of its production tonnage for that facility, paid each turn for five turns, to study the unit. After that time, it may attempt a die roll on the Weapons and Equipment Availability and Cost tables on page 66 in the MECHWARRIOR rules, selecting the most difficult availability roll appropriate to the unit captured. If the roll fails, the House may continue to pay 10% of that unit's weight each turn for a new roll (to a total of three such rolls). Once the roll succeeds, the House may build that unit as one of its own. Captured units of the same type as the unit studied will not then require the extra 10% for repairs.

Repairs

Each House and mercenary unit must repair its units at the end of each turn. This is accomplished in the following manner:

1. For every piece of equipment destroyed, a roll on the appropriate Weapons and Equipment Availability and Cost tables, on page 66 in the MECHWARRIOR rules, is used to check for a repair attempt. If the roll succeeds, the equipment is fixed. If the roll fails, the equipment must be replaced. A House must always pay to replace armor.

2. If the repair is not made, the House may either use battlefield salvage or pay (in tons) to replace the part in question (see "Production" and "Salvage" for details).

House-Specific Units

Each House starts the game with particular units (and their variants) that it alone can produce. Other Houses have trouble using these specific units if these units are captured, and those Houses must spend more to operate those units as their own. Mercenary units may use these units with no restrictions but cannot pass informa-

tion to other Houses on how to use these units. House-specific units include:

- 1. Davion: Enforcer, Valkyrie
- 2. Kurita: Dragon, Panther
- 3. Steiner: Zeus, Wolfhound, Hatchetman, Commando
- 4. Marik: Hermes II, Orion
- 5. Liao: Vindicator, Cataphract, Ravin

A House may trade information on the operation of its own House-specific units with other Houses. How such agreements and payments are reached is left up to the Houses involved (but such agreements should be made in writing to aid record keeping). Any House receiving this information may now build and operate that specific unit as if it were that House's own.

Initial House Forces

Each House gets 15 turns worth of initial construction. No expansion of existing facilities may take place; only units may be built. Pilots are created as per the usual rules, except that each House gains one each of the following types of pilots for free: 0-0, 1-1, 2-2. These are the House's combat leaders and the cream of its military. In addition, each House receives one



Raid Success Table

1d6	Results
1	Attackers are caught just before the raid; roll on Combat Subtable.
2-5	Continue with raid as planned.
6	Attackers have 50% chance to be caught after the raid (roll 1d6: 1-3, all escape; 4-6, roll on Combat Subtable).

Combat Subtable

1d6	Results
1-2	DropShips are caught while trying to escape and are destroyed. Raiding House loses half its force (including pilots) and half of all booty, if any.
3-6	DropShips are caught and surrender while trying to escape. Raiding House loses half its force (including pilots): all booty is recaptured. Captured pilots may be ransomed.

BATTLETECH® Campaign Planetary Directory

Facility	Houses				
	Davion	Kurita	Steiner	Marik	Liao
Assault 'Mech-DropShip/500	New Avalon	Luthien	Tharkad	Atreus	Sian
Heavy 'Mech/150	Robinson	Benjamin	Skye	Regulas	Capella
Medium 'Mech/100	New Sytris	Dieron	Donegal	Marik	Sarna
Light 'Mech/50	Montcoal	Rasalhaghe	Tamar	Escobas	Tikonov
Vehicle/50	Delphos	Pesht	Turinge	Oriente	St. Ives
200	Kentares IV	Iljima	Bountiful Harvest	New Delos	Glasgow
	Pattonsborg	Soverzene	Hesperus II	Rasalas	Shensi
100	New Ivaarsen	Alya	Carstairs	Amity	Dilon
	Stein's Folly	Junction	Halfway	Ibstock	Menke
Strategic	Aucara	Beta Mensau V	Borghese	Loongana	Capolla
	Damevang	Caldrea	Vulcan	Preston	Heligoland
	Ulan Bator	Gunzburg	Zwenkau	Talitha	Tantara

Notes: These are merely the worlds used in the Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan campaign; other campaigns may use other worlds. Mercenaries are assumed to come from Terra.



Overlord, one Union, and two Leopard DropShips for free. Houses ignore the limits on the number and types of units produced for the initial construction period (as noted under "Production"), and each House may have two modified assault 'Mechs, two modified heavy 'Mechs, four modified medium 'Mechs, eight modified light 'Mechs, and eight modified vehicles.

Each House may also place up to 25 tons of fixed defenses on each of its worlds for free. The world designated as the House's capital gets 50 tons and one of the production facilities. Houses may not add to their fixed defenses with initial construction projects.

Each group of players operating a House must designate a leader to coordinate the efforts of all players on the team, to help with rules disputes, and to check the accuracy and legality of the House's plans and actions.

Pilot Swaps

Switching a pilot from one unit to the same type of unit is allowed without penalty (e.g., an Atlas pilot can run any Atlas). When a pilot goes to a similar but different unit—e.g., to a 'Mech in the same weight class as the original 'Mechs (light, medium, etc.), or to a vehicle or other unit having the same mode of movement as the original (track, hover, etc.—he loses one skill level each from both pilot and gunnery skills. If a pilot is transferred to any other 'Mech or vehicle in the same type of unit—e.g., from a Wasp to a Griffin (different weight classes), or from a hover vehicle to a tracked vehicle—he loses two skill levels each from both pilot and gunnery skills. A pilot sent from 'Mechs to vehicles or vice versa loses three skill levels each from both pilot and gunnery skills.

Mercenary Units

Mercenary units are available for purchase in the game. Each such unit is about two companies in strength, with supporting vehicles. Each contract should be written out and must contain the following information:

1. Payment in tons (but see following section);
2. Length of contract (in turns); and
3. Maintenance terms. If the House allows the mercenary unit to use that House's own maintenance facilities, then the mercenary unit may roll on the appropriate Weapons and Equipment Availability and Cost tables on page 66 of the MECH-WARRIOR rules, under the appropriate House. If the use of House maintenance is not permitted, then the mercenary unit must roll under the Periphery headings of those tables.

A House may pay mercenaries with new vehicles and 'Mechs, but these must come from that House's production. Mercenaries may use any unit, even House-specific units, with no additional costs. Other aspects of the contract (e.g., no attacking the former employer) are left to be decided between the mercenary and House. Each mercenary's goal is to keep his unit alive and growing in reputation and size, while having a good time.

Starting out: A mercenary unit may start the campaign with 1,600 tons for building its initial units. Each mercenary unit must complete its construction projects as if it were a House with 1,600 tons of resources to be used over four turns. Drop Ships are provided for free at the game's start, as are a 1-1 pilot and a 2-2 pilot (the leaders of the mercenary unit). The unit may build one each modified assault, heavy,

and medium 'Mech, and two each modified light 'Mechs and vehicles.

Raids

Each House may conduct hit-and-run raids against another House to gain resources and equipment parts.

To gain resources, a House's forces must get to the storage area for a House's resource production area or a stockpile at a House's unit production area. Each attacking unit may carry off resources at the rate given for picking up things in *The BATTLETECH Manual: The Rules of Warfare* (page 41). The raided House gets to keep the difference between what it produced and what the raiders took.

To gain equipment parts, the procedure is the same as for gaining resources except that parts are found only at a House's production facility. Partially completed units may be carried off and completed at the raiding House's own production facilities.

Special JumpShip movement must be used on deep raids (raids extending over 48 parsecs to a limit of 128 parsecs from a friendly planet). DropShips used on a raid may each have a maximum of only 12 'Mech cubicles (Overlord DropShips cannot be used). The whole DropShip raiding force must have a total of at least 24 'Mech cubicles of space to make the raid (e.g., if using only Leopards, each having four 'Mech cubicles, a House must use at least six Leopards on a raid).

To conduct a raid, the attacking House announces that a raid is taking place, then rolls on the Raid Success Table to make sure that its forces got there.

Look for part 2 of our BATTLETECH campaign rules next month!



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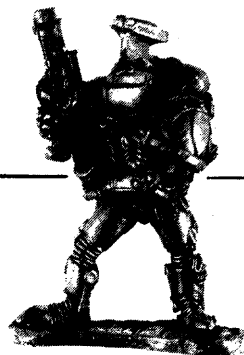
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Alternative Armies



ALTERNATIVE ARMIES,
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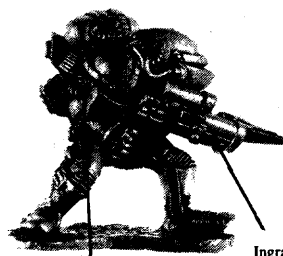
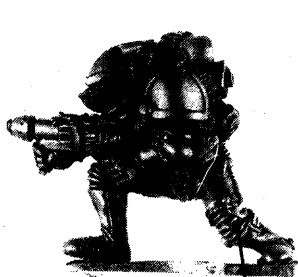


Free Crusaders

Crusader, noun. Single-minded rebel, defiler, unbeliever; specifically applied to the former members of the Ranger Corps, now under the Common Ban and the Ban of Prejudice.

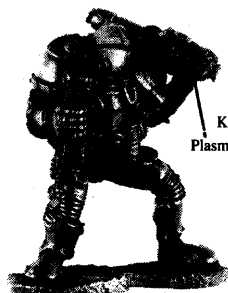
Templar, noun. Terrorist, assassin, ambusher, spy, fanatic; member of the anti-democratic movement based around the former Ranger Corps.

Commonwealth Dictionary of Truth

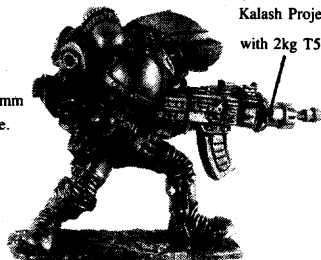


Ingramms 12.5mm HV1
with armour-piercing shells.

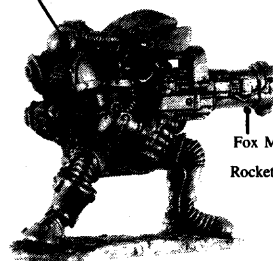
Multi-phase Stasis Scout Armour with full environmental back-up.



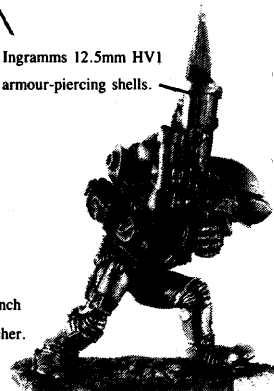
Kolt 40mm
Plasma Rifle.



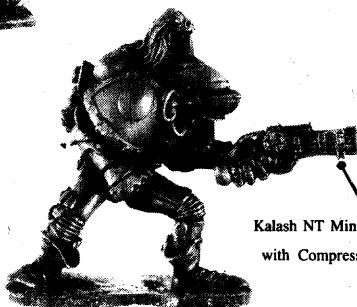
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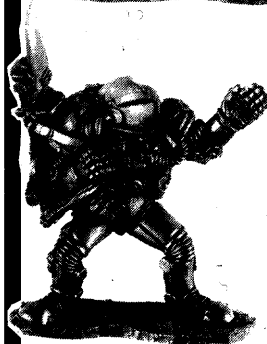
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Free Companies

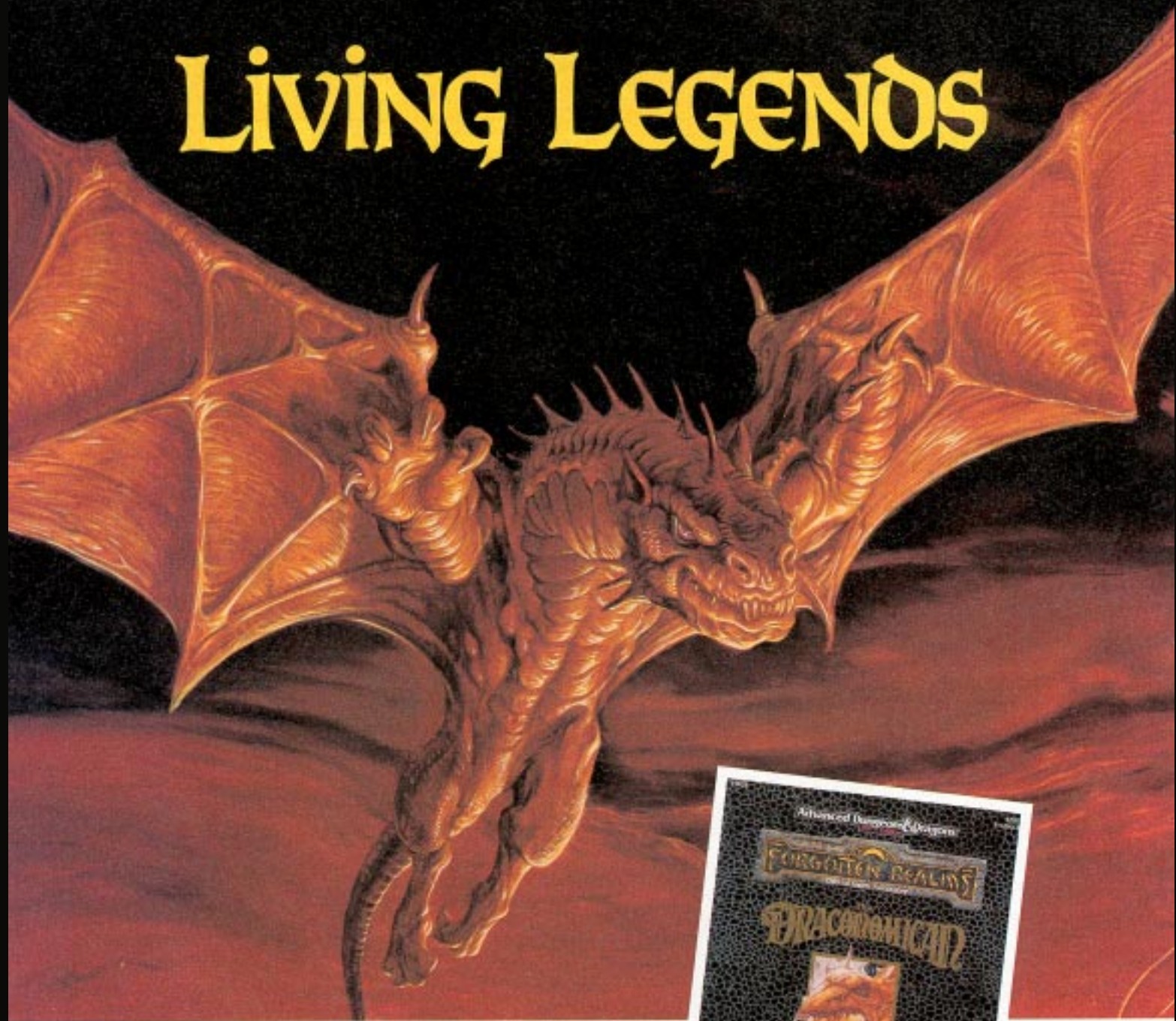
They live on hidden worlds at the rim of human progress; warriors, men and women, dedicated to a dream. The Commonwealth has placed them under the Ban of Prejudice, with orders to kill on sight. But though hunted as criminals, they still preserve their discipline and power. The Free Companies are not rebels—they are the embodiment of resentment against usurpers and traitors. And at the centre of their creed is The Command. Given to them by the King—when there was a King, and they were the Imperial Corps of Pioneers and Rangers—they were sought to liberate humankind by searching ever wider for new homelands. Now they seek the one thing that will liberate them even more completely—the True King.

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THE GATES OF THORBARDIN

Closer and closer the two fliers came, and more and more Bobbin had to admit that it DID look like a dragon. A huge red, flying dragon, coming directly toward him and his soarwagon.

Fear washed up and down the gnome's spine. Then a voice spoke to him. "Who are you?" it asked, seeming to be right beside him.

Whether it was Bobbins numb, trembling hands, or a current of air that was the cause, the soarwagon slipped right, stalled, and went into a nosedive. As he saw the mountaintops straight ahead, the air behind him crackled with fire.

The voice said, "I can't let you live, you know."

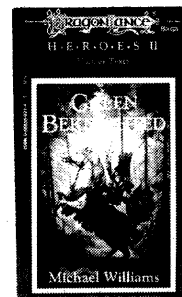
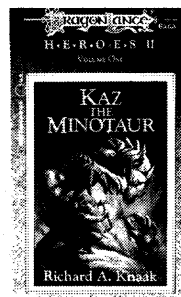
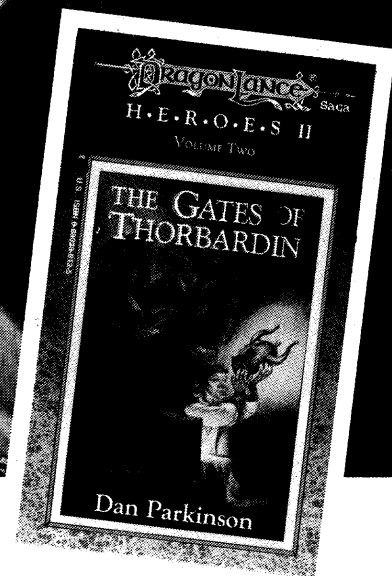
"Why not?" cried Bobbin.

"Because you have seen me," the calm dragon voice said. "That is your misfortune. None who see me will live to tell of it ... that could spoil the Highlord's plan."

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